

The Blood of the New Covenant Part 2

a sermon in the series
Hebrews: An Epistle of Encouragement

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by S. Michael Durham
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Hebrews 9:18-28

Whereupon neither the first testament 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 of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, 20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. 21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. 23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

In a world where we often think too much about things which have little importance and too little on that which has much importance, it is good we pause and focus on the words of our text. We are much concerned with falling stock prices and gloomy economic reports. We are also overly preoccupied with being entertained. I think it to be true that most Americans put more planning into their vacations than they do in eternal matters. But our text is full of eternity! Ages forever rolling on, without boundary, are in these verses. There is so much in these verses to share with you that I have been betwixt myself on trying to preach this in just two sermons. But I fear that the majesty of the whole would be lost if we tried to dissect it any further. Should we bring out the microscope, I fear we would be overwhelmed by the detail and miss the theme.

In our text we find the central focus of history. I sometimes find myself watching the History Channel. I enjoy history and consider myself a student of it. I believe one who does not learn history is doomed to repeat it because history is cyclical. Also, historians amuse me. I have received much laughter at the reading and listening to historical philosophers sharing their learned and esteemed opinions on what is the watershed event of history. What is the greatest moment in history, the pinnacle of all time, the single most important event of the human race? At the turn of the millen-

nium last year a documentary was aired that listed the top 100 historical events of the human race. The number one and most important historical event according to this panel of historians was the invention of the printing press.

Surely the printing press was monumental, but ask the writer of Hebrews what is the most important historical event. I think he would tell us something more profound than printing presses. Why, he has told us right here in our text. He says, “But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” This is the great divide, the watershed of history. By Christ sacrificing Himself on the cross, He instituted the promise of the New Covenant.

Last week we shared four benefits of the blood of our Savior. They were eternal redemption, cleansing of conscience, redemption of Old Testament saints, and eternal inheritance. Today we proceed to share two more.

THE DEDICATION OF HEAVEN

The first benefit I want us to look at this morning is what the writer calls the dedication of Heaven. Read verse eighteen,

Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood (Hebrews 9:18).

This flows from the thoughts of verses sixteen and seventeen. Since we broke this paragraph up in the middle, let’s go back and read verses sixteen and seventeen.

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is a force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth (Hebrews 9:16-17).

Up to this point in the book of Hebrews, the author has called the promise that God made to Israel, recorded in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, a New Covenant. Now the translators who translated the Greek into English changed the Greek word for “covenant” into “testament” in our text. The Greek word is *diatheke*. The word can mean either a covenant or testament such as a last will and testament. It can be used either way, but most often in the Greek mind and literature it was used to mean not a covenant but a last will and testament. Up to this point it has been translated “covenant,” but now in these three verses the English shows a difference of translation and uses the word, “testament.” There is a significant reason for this because the context tells us the writer is not talking about a covenant, which is an agreement that God has made with us, much like a contract. The author is reminding us that a will or a testament cannot be in force until the person who wrote the will dies. The moment they die the will is in force.

Now it is important that we understand that the Old Covenant could not be in force without death. The word “blood” here doesn’t just mean the red liquid that flows in our veins. It means the shedding of that blood—the losing of life—death. Dear friends, there is nothing mystical in the

blood of Jesus. His was human blood, but what gives it its value is whose blood it is. Jesus could have cut His finger and bled, but that blood would have not forgiven you of sin. When we talk about the blood of Jesus we are literally talking about His death. There is nothing mystical in the blood of Christ. His death was foreordained that it would be by the shedding of blood. The Scriptures say that without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Why? Because God set up symbols and types to illustrate truth. While the Old Covenant is not really a last will and testament, it was brought into force by death as a type showing that one day there was going to be a will that God would make to all of His heirs, the people of grace, the elected ones. So it foreshadowed the death of Christ and the New Covenant His death would put into force.

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the testament, which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:19-21).

This is what Moses did in order to institute the Old Covenant system of worship. Now the question is what was the purpose of all of this purifying by blood? All that I know of blood is that it stains, not cleanses. Ask anyone who has ever gotten blood on a garment; it is very difficult to remove. How then can blood purify or cleanse anything?

First, it is a type or illustration that repentance and faith without blood have no merit. This is true and significant in our times. Repentance and faith have no merit and no value without shedding of blood. You can ask God to forgive you every day of your life, you can say you are sorry, and you can turn away from sin, but without Jesus' death there is no forgiveness. It is the death of Christ that gives the power to repentance and faith. In fact, without the death of Christ you would not have faith nor would you repent. Our Lord purchased those two gifts for you on Calvary (2 Peter 1:3).

Second, the Old Covenant tabernacle had to be purified with blood as a way to teach the terrible price of sin in the most visible of expression. We live in a society that is so accustomed to violence that it does not bother us anymore. We have become desensitized to it, mainly because of Hollywood. We can now see grotesque murders and all sorts of violent crimes through the medium of movies and we have become immune to it; it doesn't bother us, it doesn't move us. Not only Hollywood but also your local evening news can dull your sense of horror when right on your television screen you see terrible, terrible acts of violence against human beings. You can see all the gore and the carnage and the waste that those acts of violence produce. We have become immune to sin's awfulness. The shock level has to be raised a little higher for something to really bother us. Therefore, when we talk about Jesus' dying and by His blood having forgiveness of sin, for the majority of people today, even Christians, it flies right over the head and does not penetrate the heart.

Therefore, God, in order to teach how violent sin is, set up a system of cruelty whereby an innocent animal is taken and its throat slit. Even we who are sportsmen, who have seen death in nature, still don't come to grips with what sin is and how deadly it is until we see an innocent animal

with its head held tight and securely and the knife raked across its throat. I know that I am being grotesque. But remember, if you lived during that dispensation as an Israelite you would have seen it. God wanted to teach visibly how terribly devastating and destructive sin is. Imagine an animal, an innocent lamb, having its throat cut open by the blade. It cannot be a quick death as its blood drains, and with it its life slowly leaks out of its body. It struggles to stand and tries to breathe. Its windpipe has also been severed. All because of sin. Such is why God said He wanted all of the Old Covenant things and the people dedicated and purified with blood. Oh, how deadly and evil sin is.

Thirdly, it was given as an illustration or a symbol of the purifying of Heaven. The earthly tabernacle was patterned after the holy place in Heaven. So now I must ask the question, why would Heaven need to be purified? And why purified by blood? In verse twenty-three of chapter nine the writer of Hebrews answers. He says,

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these (Hebrews 9:23).

What does that mean? Quite simple—all of the old tabernacle and its furniture was patterned after something that existed in Heaven that God showed Moses. We studied this back in the eighth chapter. The tabernacle was patterned after the true tabernacle in Heaven, the Most Holy Place, and the very throne room of God. The things that Moses made the Old Covenant tabernacle from had to be purified with blood because the Heavenly things would also be purified by blood. Why?

The reason that blood was necessary for Heaven, and not the blood of animals but the blood of Jesus, is because Heaven is now dedicated as a place of intercession. The word “purify” or “purge” in our text can also be interpreted for dedication or setting apart. Heaven has been dedicated by the blood of Christ as a place of intercession. In the Old Testament the sacrifice was on the outside of the Holy of Holies. The animals were not sacrificed in the Most Holy Place. They were slaughtered outside of the veil leading into the Holy of Holies. The high priest would take the blood of the sacrifice, and he would pass through the veil and go into the Holy of Holies where he would sprinkle the blood upon the horns of the Ark of the Covenant, and the mercy seat. As he did this he would make intercession for the people. In the same way, Jesus by His death entered into the Most Holy Place, the throne room of God, and He dedicated that most holy place as a place of intercession. Even now He is our high priest interceding on our behalf.

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

Oh, brother, whose heart is wearied with the lack of your sanctification, your High Priest is praying for your sanctification. You who are burdened today with your own loads of care and problems, listen, the place of Heaven and the throne room of God were dedicated for the specific purpose that God in Christ Jesus would pray on your behalf. He is interceding for you. Your limbs are tired and they are weak, you don't seem to be able to do the things that you ought to do, you find yourself doing the things you don't want to do. But there is right now a high priest whose very person is

a reminder of His death to the Father. It is upon this truth that you and I always have acceptance with the Father. Look at verse twenty-four,

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, [which are] the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24).

He did all this to appear in the presence of God for us. So there, my friends, Jesus' sacrifice is there forever cleansing us and keeping us. One day we will be purified and glorified by this same Savior.

THE PUTTING AWAY OF SIN

Let's move to the second benefit of Christ's blood. That is the putting away of sin. Look at verse twenty-five through twenty-eight.

Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:25-28).

Christ has removed the sin of His people. That is the second benefit of the blood of Christ. Now He did this, the Bible says, through one sacrifice, just one. In the Old Testament, the high priest had to do yearly sacrifices of atonement and every day sacrifices were being made by the other priests. But through the sacrifice of Christ, once and for all He has put away sin from us. I struggle as you do with this concept. It just doesn't seem fair, it just doesn't seem right that the sin I may commit tomorrow is not imputed to me because of only one sacrifice. It seems like there should be another sacrifice for that sin. But, oh thanks be unto God, I don't need another sacrifice; the first one was sufficient to put away all sin from you and me for all time.

This one sacrifice is never to be repeated for two reasons. In verse twenty-seven we find the first reason.

It is appointed to man once to die but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Jesus could only die once as a man. To require our Lord to die again goes beyond the boundaries of God's own justice with mankind. A man can die only once, therefore Christ as a man has died once, never to die again. Sinner, listen to me, if you have ever wondered how God could be merciful and loving to a sinner, if you have ever thought how could God have any compassion towards a weak human being as yourself, how could God ever know your struggles? Here is how. He became one of us. He became a man. He knows the frailties of the human body, yet without sin. He knows what it means to be tempted and to know the adversary's fierce breath in His face as He was tempted with every temptation subject to all mankind. He knows what it is like. He can identify

with you, and there is no sin that you have sinned that He isn't willing to put away. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him, then His blood has put away that sin for you.

The second reason that it can only be done once is because Jesus' sacrifice is of infinite value. The sacrificed bulls and goats obviously were not human beings. They didn't have a conscience. Animals do not have a spirit like you and I do. Therefore, they were used as symbols of a sacrifice yet to come. But the sacrifice they pointed to was just not a man. Let me remind you, Jesus is not just a man; He is God, robed in human flesh. Dear friend, let me make this perfectly clear, especially for the theologians listening. I am one who is a firm believer that the Bible says that Christ died for His own. That means that He died to atone the sins of His people that He had chosen before the foundation of the world. The Bible is clear on this. We have preached this on many occasions and have explained it thoroughly. But if God would have desired to save a million more sinners, Jesus' death was sufficient for that. If He wanted to save a thousand worlds like Earth, His one sacrifice would have been sufficient because it is of infinite value. God in the flesh is still God, and He is still infinite. Christ is infinite, loved by the Father with an infinite love. Although Christ had the limitations of man, He was still of infinite worth. This is a mystery that the Lord has kept veiled, but do not be deceived, His sacrifice is sufficient once and for all.

Notice also Jesus was an offering. The Bible says, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (verse 28). It is true that Jesus said "I lay down my life," and that He gave it freely. No one took His life from Him. But on the other hand, Jesus was also offered up by the Heavenly Father as a sacrifice and a sin bearer for us. It is the Father's love that drew salvation's plan. It was a Father who in kindness and mercy sent His Son to die on a cross for sinners. By that payment He bore the sins of everyone who will believe and repent and trust in Him, so that none shall perish who come to Christ in faith and repentance. He has borne my sin. This is the encouraging word to all who have yet to know Christ. There is a sacrifice and it is a sacrifice of infinite value. Trust in it, believe in it. If you do, Christ will remove not only all of your sin, but the Bible tells me that Christ will remove all sin.

This is the second reason why are Lord's death need not be repeated. Christ will remove all sin at his second coming. Look again at verse twenty-eight.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him (now notice these words) shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:28).

Jesus is coming again. This is my hope; I don't want to live in this world forever. Talk about a purgatory, that would be it. I don't believe in purgatory, but that would be the closest thing to it, having to be banished to this world and live like we live now, forever. Oh no, Jesus is coming. This time He is coming unto salvation. But wait a minute, I am already saved. What is this coming a "second time without sin unto salvation"? Yes, but listen to verse twenty-six.

...but now once in the end of the world he hath appeared to put away sin.

There is still something our Lord has to do. He has already done it, He is just finishing it. When Jesus hung on the cross and died, not only did He pay the sin debt of all of those who believed on Him, but He also destroyed the power of Satan. We read of this in the beloved John's first epistle.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Yet, the evil one has been granted a temporary time until he meets his doom. Thus, our Savior, Jesus Christ is going to come again, and this time He will come much like a sweeper. He will sweep up all the corruption and filth of the human race and will put it in His everlasting inferno. He is going to put it into an eternal Hell and there it will remain separated from all the rest of His universe. Never again will it be set free to be a menace to anyone. He will consummate at the end of the world His victory over sin.

This is very important to our eschatology. When is the "end of the world?" Is it when the "Anti-Christ" shall be revealed, or will it be when the rapture should occur? No, it began with the coming of Christ. That is the beginning of the last days. As far as the author of Hebrews was concerned, it was the last days for him as it is for us. He said that Christ has already come at the "end of the world." He is not referring to the second coming of Christ but rather the first coming. If the first coming of Christ is considered the "end of the world" why, so far, a two thousand year interlude? It is for nothing but to gather His people in and to save you. When all His people are saved, then time shall be no more, and He shall appear a second time and shall deal with the removing of sin permanently. He will take what He did on the cross and make it visible to all creatures in Heaven and in Hell and on earth. He will have finished the work of putting away sin. That is what the writer means by "unto salvation." I am going to be redeemed from this old body, and in the twinkling of an eye, this body is going to be changed, and it will not be like it is now. I won't have the sinful tendencies and the wrong thought patterns that make me think and do and say things that I should not. I am going to be redeemed from it. Glorious day, oh Lord, come quickly.

I must finish but not before explaining to you one final point. I want to ask the question, who are the many that He has saved? Who are the many whose sins He bore? "Them that look for Him." "Them that look for him" are the ones for whom He has borne their sins. Are you looking for Jesus? This is an interesting word "look." The word "look" comes from a Greek word that means patiently awaiting or eagerly waits. For whom has Christ borne their sins? All of those who are eagerly and patiently waiting for him. Are you eagerly waiting for Him? The Bible says, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). This hope is called the blessed hope.

I know that it is so easy to be discouraged with life. Life is just that way. It can be discouraging and uneasy. My, my, I look at our young people and children and I think, oh, what idealism. I don't want to ever lose my idealism, but the reality of getting older is there are some things that you can't do. There are some things that you may never conquer; there are some things that you may never, ever accomplish in life. Life is so stressful, one hardship after another. Well, my dear friend, I want to ask

you why then would you be putting all of your eggs in this basket called human existence on planet Earth? Why not eagerly await something better. Do not put your hope in this life, something better is coming! Escapist mentality? You bet it is. I confess, I want out of here. I am looking forward to a “city whose builder and maker is God.” I will no longer look upon Christ, my Lord, with eyes of faith but with my very eyes see Him. Do you have that hope? If not, let me tell you, go to the cross, just as the writer of Hebrews has pointed us. He has directed us to that sacrifice, that watershed event in history, the most single important event that has ever occurred. I point you back to it as well. Look at Jesus suffering on your behalf. Meditate on His groaning; look upon His suffering. Look upon the holy brow bloodied and bruised and crowned with thorns. Look at the agonizing. But don’t look at just the physical suffering, I bid you to look at His heart as it breaks right in two as His Father turns on Him and pours upon the Son the wrath and anger that a sinner deserves. It is the wrath you deserve. See His suffering on that cross and claim it as your own; believe it, turn from your sin, trust and treasure His sacrificial death, and you too shall live. Why should you die? He died that you should live. The blessed Lord has come once to save by His death. He shall come a second time to save by His life. Amen.