

21—Hebrews 9:1-14—Purified to Worship the Living God

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I. Introduction

- A. Kimberly and I were married in 1998. Neither of us were believers. Our journey together started on the wrong path. But God in his grace saved both of us and our lives have never been the same.
- B. A couple of years into our marriage, I gave up farming to work at a clay company for more money and insurance. I didn't really want to do that kind of work but I had to provide for us.
- C. I also had to support my own religion—duck hunting. We had a pretty nice set up with heaters and stoves to cook on. So we needed propane to operate those things. So, occasionally, we would haul them out to get them filled.
- D. At the clay company I worked for, we had propane forklifts and a tank to keep them filled. We asked permission to fill our propane tanks up there and just pay them for what we used. It had a meter on it like a gas pump. So we would tell them how much we put into our tanks and we would pay the office.
- E. On one particular night I was alone with nothing to do except load trucks if they came. So, I decided to go fill our tanks while I had nothing to do. While I was filling them one of our supervisors came by and asked me what I was doing. I don't know why, but I panicked and lied to him.
- F. Long story short, I got caught and lost my job. I felt so guilty and I couldn't figure out why I didn't just tell the truth because I wasn't doing anything wrong. The lying was wrong, though. Where did that feeling of guilt come from? It was my conscience. "As God's image bearers, we are moral creatures. We make moral judgments about right and wrong. 'The conscience is that part of you that shines the moral spotlight back on yourself.' It's not merely the sense of knowing there's right and wrong; it also includes a sense that we will have to answer for all we do and think and feel." (Bret Rogers)
- G. Years later after I had become a believer, I ran into that former supervisor. Even then I still felt the burn in my soul but this time I was free to admit who I was and beg his forgiveness. That whole scene began an even longer story of both my wife and I coming to Christ. That which began in guilt in shame ended in the freedom of forgiveness of God's amazing grace.

II. Main Point

- A. The main point of our text this morning is the superiority of the sacrifice of Christ which results in the superior worship because our conscience has been purified by the blood of Christ.

III. Outline

- A. Are you Satisfied with mere Furniture and Bread
- B. Unending Sacrifices and Limited Access
- C. Payment in Full and Eternal Redemption
- D. We shall See His Face!

IV. Exposition

- A. I can imagine that some of you struggle to read through the books of Exodus and especially Leviticus every year about this time. But they are super important in the first 10 verses of this chapter. So how do I help you see their importance without losing you? Well, it's not completely up to me. You have to have to want it. And for the ones who want to lean back and dream about lunch plans this text is all the more important to you. We are too easily satisfied and I'm here today to suggest otherwise. This text is appealing to you to long for more and to not be satisfied until you have Jesus and are filled up with the Holy Spirit of God. This first section discusses the old covenant tabernacle and its furnishings.
 1. Chapter 8 ended by saying the old covenant had come to an end and the new covenant had taken its place.
 - a) Chapter 8 argued that Jesus was a mediator of a better covenant.
 - b) Chapter 9 makes the case that one reason Jesus is a mediator of a better covenant is because Jesus offers a better sacrifice.
 - c) But before he makes that claim, he sets out to explain the former covenant regulations for sacrifices.
 2. There in verse one, he points us back to that old covenant which he just mentioned was passing away.

- a) He tells us that it had regulations for worship.
 - (1) A quick reminder: this word for worship can also mean serve. That which we serve is what we worship. What we worship we also serve.
 - (a) You can take a look at what it that you serve and find out who or what your god is. What does the evidence say?
 - b) The preacher describes the tent of worship as having two sections.
 - (1) An outer or first section where the lampstand and the table and the Bread of the Presence were. It is called the Holy Place.
 - (2) The inner or second section was called the Holy of Holies.
 - (a) In it was the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the jar of manna and Aaron's staff that had budded with blossoms and almonds. And lastly, the Ten Commandments were there.
 - (b) Above the ark of the covenant were the two cherub of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. They were not actual angels but golden images of them.
 - i) The mercy seat was the place of God's glory and presence.
 - ii) This mercy seat is the place where God dwelled with his people behind the second curtain.
 - iii) It was the place of propitiation—the place where payment was made for the sins of the people.
 - iv) In Exodus 25:22 There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.
3. He ends this section by saying that he will not belabor the point. They all likely know these things as formerly growing up in Judaism.
- a) But I'm not sure you know what all this means. Even for those who have read through Exodus and Leviticus it may not make sense.
 - (1) I read this verse in Leviticus Thursday morning that sums up why all the laws and sacrifices.
 - (a) Leviticus 15:31 "Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst."
 - i) Just a few notes to think about.
 - ii) There were many reasons for uncleanness. The list is there in Leviticus to read. From leprosy to bodily discharges or touching a dead body. All of these things caused the people to be unclean and either temporarily or permanently cut them off from worship at the tabernacle.
 - iii) "Moses and Aaron were warned to keep the people separate from anything that makes them unclean so the Israelites will not defile the tabernacle. Such a violation would result in death. This verse indicates that it is not uncleanness brought about by discharges that evokes God's punishment but failure to rectify the condition by which individuals would be permitted to worship and serve God." (M. Rooker 206).
 - (1) To make this as simply as possible—if I had cut myself and the scab was oozing I could not go to worship at the tabernacle until I went through the proper procedures prescribed in the law.
 - (a) Now, those laws could clean me up and restore tabernacle worship but what if I were embarrassed and angry with the Lord for making me look like a fool?
 - (b) "Where's Jason at today? I guess he's unclean and cannot come to worship."
 - (c) Then my conscience burned within me because of my guilt for thinking that way. The sacrifice cleaned my skin but what about my heart?

B. That gets us to the next section, 6-10. We know there were regulations for worship in the earthly tent which had the furniture and the show bread in one section and the ark of the covenant in the inner section. Now we need to consider that uncleanness was never going to be fixed and depended on regular ritual duties by the priests and continued very limited access to God once a year.

1. Just as a heads up—this section is setting up a contrast with the last section. I will point out the important words to make note of.
2. The first one is that of regular sacrifices needing to be made. Twice a day the priests offered up sacrifices.
 - a) This was done in the outer section of the tent among the lampstand and the Bread of the Presence.
 - b) 364 days out of the year, they worshiped God in front of a lamp and a loaf of bread.
 - c) He was behind the second curtain and as it says there in verse 7—only the high priest went back there once a year on the Day of Atonement.
 - (1) He went in there to offer blood sacrifice of certain animals for the himself and the unintentional sins of the people.
 - (a) A quick note about unintentional sins—that is sins of ignorance.
 - i) The question comes up—is that all the high priest was making sacrifices for?
 - ii) Well, “defiant sins were not amendable to forgiveness and for the preacher they are comparable to the apostasy he warns against in this book.” (Schreiner, 262).
 - iii) An example—Numbers 15:30 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people.
 - iv) What about King David—adultery and murder? They required his death but God spared him. How? Because God did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all...It is God who justifies. (Rom. 8:32, 33).
 - (2) We must see by this regular offering and limited access to God once a year is indicating by the Holy Spirit that the way into the holy place is not yet opened.
 - (a) Those sacrifices did not bring the people near to God. It did not restore that fellowship with God that was intended from the beginning of creation.
 - (b) The preacher points this out as if to see if they notice it. Were they satisfied with never being restored to that fellowship with God?
 - i) V. 9—which is symbolic for the present age.
 - (1) “As long as the earthly sanctuary remained valid, there was no regular access to God in either the earthly or the heavenly sanctuary.” (Schreiner 263).
 - (2) Do those people have a clue what the old covenant tabernacle and sacrifices were communicating? Was a lamp and a loaf of bread sufficient for them?
 - (3) Did they not want to be with God?
 - (a) In some ways, probably not because their consciences could not be made perfect. They feared his presence like they did the day Moses went up Mt. Sinai.
 - (b) Verse 10—The sacrifices dealt with only food and drink and various washings, REGULATIONS for the body—the outer—until the time of the reformation.
 - (c) I wanted to wait until the end to say this but I don’t want to miss my opportunity to point something out to you.
 - i) Do you see what our elements of worship are communicating?
 - (1) Do you see what the Lord’s Supper is reminding us of?
 - (a) For most of church history, they have debated whether the elements are Christ’s presence or not or to what extent.
 - (b) Some of you might think it’s real presence in the elements that we are actually eating flesh and drinking the blood of Christ.
 - (c) Others will say there is real presence but the elements are not real flesh and real blood.
 - (d) While some maintain that they are merely symbolic.
 - (e) Whatever position you hold, 2000 years of church history has yet to unravel that mystery.

- (f) Here's what I can say—Christ is not physically present with us though he is with us by the Spirit. He is with us by his perfect knowledge of us. And this act of worship is by faith.
 - (g) Therefore, this act is to remind us that we are not fully present with God but that Christ's broken body and shed blood have made the way back to God.
 - (h) If in taking the Lord's Supper you are not searching your hearts (your conscience) for hidden, unconfessed sins and preparing yourself to meet God face to face then you are missing the point.
 - (i) If in taking the Lord's Supper you are not longing to sit at the Table of the King himself and dine with him, you are missing the point.
 - (j) That's the same danger these people face. And we face it too.
 - (k) I want to sit at the wedding feast of the Lamb and I want real the bread and the good wine of God's fellowship!
- C. This is a good transition to the last section. In contrast to the regular and insufficient sacrifices with limited access to God comes the once for all sacrifice that is actually payment instead of renting. Jesus purifies our consciences and brings about eternal redemption.
1. Notice there in verse 11 —But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come.
 - a) The old covenant was pointing to the good things that were coming. And they are here!
 - (1) Galatians 4:4-7 ⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.
 - b) In this new era of Christ's coming, he has entered God's presence—the true and more perfect tent...the one that is not of this creation or handmade.
 - (1) He willingly entered. Unlike the animal sacrifices who did not willingly give up their lives for those bloody sinners, Christ gladly lays down his life for his enemies.
 - (2) And he did it once for all.
 - (a) ...not regularly.
 - (b) ...not through the blood of goats and bulls, or the ashes of a heifer that merely cleaned the flesh.
 - (3) Another great use of a participle there in v. 12—but by his own blood, thus securing (there it is) eternal redemption.
 - (a) He alone secured it.
 - (b) He and no other secured it forever.
 - (4) How much more will the blood of Christ purify our conscience—on the inside of us where we feel guilt and shame are?
 - (a) He fixes us. He frees our consciences from dead works.
 - i) Why? To serve and worship the living God.
 - ii) Who do you serve and worship?
 - iii) Is your conscience purified by the blood of Christ?
 - iv) Or is it seared by unbelief?
- D. I want to take a moment here at the end to look at ourselves. As we've already heard in the book Hebrews—some did not benefit from the good news they heard because they did not have faith.
1. Let's evaluate our conscience.
 - a) The conscience refers to removing sins from the heart.
 - (1) Do you regularly feel guilty but never do anything about it? Instead, you try to drown out your thoughts with TV or alcohol or keeping busy or just not letting yourself think about it.
 - (2) Maybe you have done that for so long that you no longer feel that sting of guilt. You have hardened your heart in unbelief and that will not end well for you.

- (3) What if you've somehow managed to suppress the truth for a number of years but right now it has come back and the sting is unbearable?
- (4) Maybe you are hiding something?
 - (a) "Sin whispers through the desires of the flesh and trying to justify it in the mind, your only hope of future happiness was to have an abortion. It whispers that you will not have a chance in the future if you don't cheat on this test. It says that you won't be noticed and liked if you don't dress provocatively. It says you will lose the one person who seems to care for you if you don't compromise your sexual standards. It says you won't have job security if you speak up about the dishonest practices at work. It says your life will be wasted in this relationship if you don't get a divorce. It says that only a fool would go on looking weak instead of getting some kind of revenge." (Piper)
 - (b) What is your conscience saying?
- b) What about those dead works?
 - (1) Joshua reminds us often of how we are to come to worship. Do you take that seriously?
 - (2) Do you believe God is real or is he just a story or just something you do or maybe he is just an idea.
 - (a) When Joshua read that call to worship does that first verse describe you? Is your soul like a deer panting for water?
 - (b) A few weeks ago, the psalmist said, "One thing I have asked for...to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord."
 - (c) At the end of the book of Revelation is says—We will see his face.
 - (d) Do you just gone through the motions of worship without any heart-filled desire be in fellowship God! Do you not want to see him?
 - (e) Is your singing, praying, giving just empty dead works?
 - (f) Can you pause right now and be honest with God and yourself?
 - (g) Can you right now look at the evidence of you life and call it like God sees it?
- c) If your conscience is burning with guilt, Jesus bids you come and be forgiven.
 - (1) The promise of the new covenant was this—Jeremiah 33:8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.
 - (2) Bring your guilt to Jesus. He will cleanse your heart. You will find freedom from guilt and shame in him.
 - (3) Come to Jesus and be forgiven! Call on his name and you will be saved. Confess your sins and he will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.
 - (4) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.