

Hebrews 9:15-28 // The Necessity of Blood

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[0:00] Hebrews chapter 9 verses 15 to 28. For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, It never takes effect while the one who made it is living.

This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool, and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep. In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary then for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands. That was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

[1:39] Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the most holy place every year with blood that is not his own.

Otherwise, Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all, at the culmination of the ages, to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many.

And he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Well, good evening, everyone.

Thanks, Robbie, for reading. And if we've not met, my name's Andrew. I'm a leader in training here at the church, and it's a great joy to have you with us this evening. You'll find on the back of your service sheets, an outline that will hopefully be of some help for you as we spend time in Hebrews 9.

[2:45] But what will be much more helpful than that is if you could keep your Bibles open, at page 1207, as we look at God's word together. Join with me now, and we'll come before the Lord seeking his help.

The psalmist writes, the unfolding of your words gives light. It gives understanding to the simple. And so, Heavenly Father, as we come before your word now, we pray that your light-giving word, would shine brightly into all of our hearts this evening, that by your spirit, we would be changed to be more like your son.

In his name we pray. Amen. Well, tonight we're continuing in the big chunk of Hebrews that is all about how we can confidently enter God's presence, thanks to the work of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews has been urging his audience that they need to stick with Christ, that although they feel tempted to go back to what they can see, what they can feel, what they can be involved in themselves, that they cannot depart from Christ, that Jesus in his person and his work is totally unique.

It's something that nothing else, no one else could ever accomplish, including the old Jewish system. He's been emphasizing the absolute supremacy of Jesus' work, and tonight we'll see that in the shedding of his very own blood, Jesus gives us full forgiveness that removes every trace of our sin forever, that we may draw near to God and fully enjoy his presence, both now and in the future.

[4:34] We'll see that in Christ we are set free from sin, we are cleansed from sin, and that we are drawn into God's presence by him. And if you're here tonight and you don't know where you stand with Christ, you're not sure what you think of him, then this is the place to be, as we consider the work of Christ, all that he offers us, and simply says, take it, it's my free gift to you.

And so we won't hang about together this evening, let's dive in our first point this evening, Christ's death sets us free. Verse 15, glance down with me.

For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a new covenant. Christ's work in cleansing our guilty conscience, so what we saw two weeks ago with his blood, is the work of a new covenant.

And a covenant is like a legal agreement, well, it is a legal agreement, and in the Bible, it's the primary way that God relates to his people. Back in chapter eight, we saw that Christ has mediated a better covenant on better promises, to the extent that the old covenant is obsolete.

He mediates, he brings people into relationship with the living God. For the purpose, verse 15, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

[6:08] What is that promised eternal inheritance? Well, it's the great promised rest that the author of Hebrews was so keen to emphasize back in chapters three and four that they must keep striving for.

It's the promised rest of God's people in God's presence, enjoying relationship with him. And it's an eternal inheritance, it's one that will never pass away.

But how can people enjoy the promised eternal inheritance? Because those who are called can receive it. And the last part of verse 15, now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

It is only now that Christ has died that we can receive our eternal inheritance to the full. God's people before Christ had no way of being truly set free from their sins.

They were stuck sacrificing animals and animals again and again to make atonement for their sin, to cleanse their sins so that they could be in relationship with God.

[7:24] And as we shall see, they were trapped by their sins. They had a big problem. They couldn't eternally rest in God's presence. It wasn't on the table because the great curtain of separation was still there.

All their sin must be atoned for before entering into the presence of God. They were held captive under the Mosaic covenant. They couldn't not sin and they couldn't pay the ransom price that would deal with all of their sin, past, present and future.

But now that Christ has paid that price, now that Christ has died, those who are called, those who accept Christ are free to receive that promised eternal inheritance.

In his work in establishing a new covenant and freeing us, he frees us to receive the long-promised eternal rest in God's presence.

It's our inheritance by his work alone. It's ours to take. It's freely given. Christ's death sets us free.

[8:40] And I think the rest of the passage unpacks different aspects of this truth. And as the writer unpacks it and as we dwell in it together, it's my prayer this evening that our affections will be raised for Christ's work and our understanding of the truly extraordinary access, the extraordinary privilege that we have now and will have awaiting us in drawing near, coming in to God's presence.

Hopefully that will grow over our time together. Our next two sections both start with, it is necessary. Verse 16, in the case of a will, it is necessary.

Verse 23, it was necessary then. And so we get two key truths of the new covenant that Christ has made. Firstly, Christ's blood sets us, sorry, Christ's blood makes us clean.

Verses 16 to 22. Why was it that Christ had to die as a ransom? Why did it have to involve his death? Why was that the ransom price?

Well, there are many answers to that, but in covenant terms, it's because blood had to be shed. Life blood had to be shed. And this is where we re-enter the sometimes murky water of covenant theology.

[10:09] I was chatting to my Greek New Testament professor this week and I was telling him, you know, I'm preaching this second half of Hebrews 9

and I'm having a bit of a hard time with it. And he went, yeah, next year we'll spend a few hours of the week trying to understand that passage.

And I thought, great, you get a few hours next year with me on it, but we've only got half an hour tonight. And so we won't go into the depths of covenant theology, but we'll try and make a clear way through it to track with the author of Hebrews' argument.

Let us remind ourselves of what's going on, verse 16 and 17. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is only in force when somebody has died. It never takes effect while the one who made it is living. If you glance down at your Bible footnotes there, you'll see that the Greek word here that is translated will is the same Greek word that's translated covenant in the rest of the book.

And the word can mean either. There's genuine disagreement. One commentator says that in deciding which one it is, there's very little to choose between it. In translating it as will, they've taken the author to be picking up on the inheritance language, saying you must be dead before someone can claim your inheritance.

[11:34] Like if I was in my will to say that my brother can take my collection of football scarves, because let's be honest, Emily has no interest in them. It would be utterly absurd if one night my brother showed up at my door demanding that I turf them over.

No, it's only when I am dead that my will is boot into effect. And so the death of Jesus means we can receive our inheritance.

The death of animals meant the Israelites could receive their inheritance. That's why they pick it up as will. And still emphasizing the death and the blood.

But I don't think that's the specific argument that Hebrews is making here. I think we're better to take it as covenant. And hopefully you'll be convinced with me as well.

It's used as that in every other place in Hebrews. And I think to take it as the analogy as well, I find it a bit clunky. I think rather the writer is picking up on the end of verse 15 with the need to be set free from sins committed under the first covenant.

[12:46] And this fits with the emphasis we've seen on the need for something new, the need for something better. And so verse 16, in the case of a covenant, where there is a covenant, i.e. there is a covenant here and it has been broken.

We've seen it being broken. It is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it. The breaking of the covenant with God, well, the consequence is death.

Because verse 17, a covenant is only in force if the person who has broken the covenant has died. The one who made it, the one who broke it.

That's the real deal of the old covenant. Obedience leads to promise rest and access to God's presence. Disobedience leads to death forever away from God's presence.

And so if the covenant breaker doesn't suffer the consequences of their disobedience, then how can you say the covenant was ever in force?

[13:58] Truly, the covenant has never taken effect until the one who made it yet broken, yet broke it, is still living. They've got to die.

They've got to take their consequences. Otherwise, the covenant has no teeth. And verse 18, well, the first covenant was put into effect with blood, symbolizing what would become of the covenant maker if they broke it.

Their own blood would be shed. And that was a very common practice in the ancient Near East when the Mosaic covenant was made. With Moses sprinkling the blood on the people, saying in verse 20, this is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.

Highlighting the importance of their obedience and their consequences for naught. And verse 21 takes us back to the great day of atonement that the first half of Hebrews 9 spoke about.

On that day in Leviticus 16, the tabernacle and everything else used was cleansed with blood. The blood of the animals was their way of remaining in covenant with God.

[15:18] As foreshadowed in the ceremony, they had broken the covenant and so they had to die. But God in his mercy let animals be used in their place.

the shedding of their blood instead paid the price for their own covenant disobedience and in so doing cleanses the people so they can remain in covenant with God so they can still have access to his presence so they could still draw near to the presence of God.

As sinful humans, we need blood to be shed to be in relationship with God, to keep having access to God.

Somebody needs to pay that price. And verse 22 really helpfully pulls together the dual function of blood together for us.

It says, in fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. forgiveness.

[16:27] Well, what does blood do? Blood, one, cleanses us from the stain of sin that we might draw near to God and blood, two, brings us forgiveness, takes the punishment that we deserve so we don't have to die and we can stay having access to God.

Why did Jesus have to die to set us free? because we need Christ's blood to cleanse us, to remove the stains of our sin that we might approach God through the new covenant, the new covenant made with his blood and because we need Christ's blood that we might be forgiven for our failure to obey the Lord.

Jesus takes our sin stained, our dirty t-shirt and he cleanses it with his blood and in so doing we are pristine again, ready to be in relationship with God, ready to draw into his presence.

Picture the scene on the mountain as Moses sprinkles the people with blood as they make the covenant, Moses going around throwing blood on everyone, cleansing them from their sin.

Well what happens next is truly remarkable. people in Exodus 24, Moses and the leaders of the people go up the mountain to where God has descended and they see God themselves.

[18:03] Not only that, but up there they eat and they drink and they enjoy the presence of God, they enjoy the access to him and they come out alive.

they as sinful people have been able to enter the presence of God and they've come back out alive. And later on in the service we will do a similar thing.

For those of us who are Christians who have been sprinkled with Christ's blood, we will in the presence of the living God come to his table.

We will eat and drink and find rest knowing that the blood of Christ gives us extraordinary access, gives us relationship with God.

We can rest in him. We have been forgiven, we have been cleansed, all by the blood of Jesus, shed for me, shed for you.

[19:11] And so in the words of Hebrews 10, 19, brothers and sisters, have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus.

And so let yourself be covered in his blood, blood that gives you forgiveness, blood that cleanses your guilty conscience and says the stain of your sin is gone.

God. And we must apply these truths to all areas of our lives. There is no sin that is not forgiven in whole when you bring it under the blood of Jesus.

There is no sin that keeps you from God when you bring it before Christ. And since you have been forgiven, let Christ's blood wash your sin away.

There is no stain left, nothing to stop you from making full advantage of your access to God. And so perhaps there is something in your life, something you did do, something you didn't do, that still haunts you to this day, that keeps you up at night worrying.

[20:32] Maybe I can't come before God. Who am I to do this? Even though you've brought it before God before, even though you've been forgiven, perhaps it makes you feel like you're a fraud.

Perhaps it makes you feel that you shouldn't be able to come into church. Perhaps it makes you feel like you shouldn't call yourself a Christian. The very same blood that gave you forgiveness cleanses you from that stain.

You are cleansed in his blood. There is no stain left by it that stops you from walking into God's presence through Christ. There's nothing in your past that can hold you back or keeps you from God unless you decide to make it.

You have truly been set free. You have truly been cleansed by Christ's blood. And Christ's blood is far superior to any blood of the old covenant.

It does what the Mosaic covenant could never do. The shedding of his blood, a one-time event. It's a one-time, once-for-all event.

[21:47] Our third point, Christ's appearances draw us near. Verses 23 to 28. In these verses, Christ's appearing is mentioned three times.

He appears for us now, end of verse 24. He appeared once for all in the middle of 26. And he will appear again in the middle of 28.

The present, the past, and the future. And so we get a second key truth of the new covenant.

Christ's sacrifice draws us near in a way not even the old covenant ever could.

Verse 23, the copies of the heavenly things on earth needed purified with the sacrifices for the covenant to keep going, for the people to have a means to stay in relationship with God.

But the heavenly things needed better sacrifices. A key Hebrew word Hebrew's word, better. For God's people to enter, not just the copy on earth, but the heavenly throne room themselves.

[23:02] They needed better sacrifices. He's showing the superiority of Christ's blood that makes it possible for us to enter God's presence in heaven now.

For appearance number one, verse 24, Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands, there was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself now to appear for us in God's presence.

Christ appears for us in God's presence in the heavenly throne room. Whereas in the old covenant, one person got in once a year, briefly, into the copy of God's throne room.

Christ takes us right in there. As Christians united to him, he appears for us in God's presence every minute of every day, every day of every year.

Not once a year, but this whole age before he returns. And through him, we have real access to God. our promised eternal inheritance can now be received in part as we enjoy being in the presence of God through Christ.

[24:21] Free access to the one who made and rules over the whole universe, who knows exactly what's going on in your life right now.

Second appearance, second way Jesus' sacrifice is better. Verse 25, he doesn't keep offering himself up time and time again.

He doesn't have to keep topping up the forgiveness levels available, so to speak. Whereas the day of atonement came round every year without fail.

Read the second bit of verse 26. He has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages. to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Jesus' sacrifice is better because he appeared once in history to do away with all sin. His death, his resurrection is the culmination of the ages as the old covenant became obsolete and the new covenant began.

[25:33] God's sin. No longer can our sin interrupt our access to God's presence until another sacrifice is made. No longer do we need to make atonement before we can come before the living God.

Christ died once for all time, paying the price of all our sin. Past, present, future, it's all been paid. he suffered once with his own blood, making a better sacrifice that draws us near to God. Sin is no longer a barrier for those trusting in him.

One death for all time. And his third appearance in the future, read verses 27 and 28 with me. Just as people are destined to die once and after that to face judgment.

So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many and he will appear a second time not to bear sin but to bring salvation for those who are waiting for him.

[26:42] Christ died once to face the death we deserve and so when he appears again he doesn't come to bear sin again though that's already been done.

No instead he comes to bring salvation to all who are waiting for him and that salvation is the great promised eternal inheritance of verse 15.

The promised rest for God's people in God's presence forever. The rest that we were made to enjoy but our sin has kept us from.

What does it look like to be waiting for him for his third appearance of this passage? Well it's to accept Christ's death to set you free.

It's to be cleansed by Christ's blood and to have been drawn near by Christ's appearances. Truly what can you offer that does any of that?

[27:49] What can you offer to contribute to the work of Jesus? Can you set yourself free from sin? Can you cleanse yourself without his blood?

Can you draw yourself near to God's presence? No. None of us can do any of that. And so we must accept that Christ does it all for us and that we have no part in doing it.

well how good are you really at letting Christ do all of that for you? Have you really accepted Christ's work by himself on your behalf?

Given up on any dream that you may be able to contribute to your own salvation? Have you let his death set you free from every single one of your sins?

Have you let his blood wash away every single one of your sins? There is the stuff you're holding on to hoping to deal with yourself one day I'll make up for that failure myself.

[28:59] I'll find the willpower myself to break free of my sinful habits. Friends just as the original readers wanted to go back to a system they felt they played more of a part in.

We mustn't go back or start trying to do things ourselves. No, we must humbly accept the unique blood of the Lord Jesus and eagerly await the fullness of the inheritance that he brings.

Cover your lives in his blood. Give your sin to him and make the most of the access he gives you to God's presence. rest is found now in the presence of God, in the loving care of the creator God who we know takes care of all of his people's needs.

That is our inheritance and rest will be found to a perfect extent when Christ appears again to bring that new creation where we will dwell with God free from all sin.

All thanks to the Lord Jesus and his free gift, his work alone. Some closing words from Isaiah 53 that the writer probably pulls off here to close.

[30:28] Speaking of God's servant king, God says therefore I will give him a portion among the great and he will divide the spoils with the strong because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors for he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father we are so thankful for the death of Jesus. The ransoms are freedom from sin that we could never pay ourselves.

for the blood of Christ that cleanses away all the many stains of our many sins that we could never cleanse ourselves.

For the appearances of Jesus that draw us into your presence now and will take us to be in your presence forever as we receive that great final promised rest.

And so we pray Lord Jesus that you would come and that by the work of your spirit may each one of us be found ready and waiting for Christ's great appearance on that day.

[31:43] Amen.