

Hebrews

Forgiveness Through Christ's Blood

Hebrews 9:15-22

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INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 9:15-22 (NASB95)

¹⁵ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. ¹⁷ For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. ¹⁸ Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. ²² And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Prayer

Since the time of Christ, people have stumbled over the doctrine that Christ had to shed His blood to atone for our sins. When Jesus announced to the twelve that He had to go to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die, the apostle Peter rebuked Him.

Matthew 16:21-22 (NASB95)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. ²² Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You."

Paul wrote how those who are perishing, the crucifixion of Christ is foolishness and a stumbling block.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-24 (NASB95)

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ...

²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are the **called, both Jews and Greeks**, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

From the very start of human history, God has made it plain that forgiveness of sins is only possible through the shed blood of an acceptable substitute. When Adam and Eve sinned, they became aware of their own nakedness and sewed fig leaves together to try to cover their guilt and shame. But God did not accept their approach. Instead, He clothed the guilty couple with the skin of a slaughtered animal.

In so doing, God demonstrated in a graphic way the horrific penalty of sin, but also His great mercy in providing an acceptable substitute.

God no doubt explained to Adam and Eve and their children the type of sacrifices that He would accept. Abel obeyed God by bringing a sacrifice from his flock, but Cain presented to God an offering from the fruit of the ground. God had regard for Abel's offering, but He had no regard for Cain's offering. In anger, Cain murdered his brother. And in his pride and rebellion, Cain became the father of those who hate God's ordained way of forgiveness through the shedding of blood.

In our text this morning the author hammers home the point that...

Forgiveness of sins comes only through the blood of Christ. We need to jump ahead in our text in order to understand the concept of how a covenant is inaugurated with blood in order for us to receive our eternal inheritance.

In **verse 15** of our text, we are taught that Christ's death covered all of the sins of those who were called under the old and new covenants, so that they "**may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**"

The mention of "**inheritance**" raises the idea of a will. There is some confusion in these verses because the same Greek word can be translated either "covenant" or "will" (or "testament"). In **verses 15, 18, and 20**, it should be translated "**covenant.**" But in **verses 16 and 17**, it has reference to a **will or last testament**, stemming from the mention of inheritance. A will is only in effect **after** the death of the one who made the will. In a similar manner, Moses inaugurated the old covenant with blood of animals in accordance with God's command. But Jesus inaugurated the new covenant with His own blood.

This morning, I would like to point out three ways in which our salvation (our inheritance) rests securely on the new covenant in Christ's blood, which is far better than the blood of animals.

BODY:

I. Our Sins have Alienated Us from God.

You can deny guilt and become hardened to the point that your conscience no longer bothers you, but if God is holy and if you have violated His holy standards, you stand legally guilty in His courtroom. So the main issue with guilt is not just guilty feelings, but actual accountability for that guilt. If God condemns you in the day of judgment, your guilt becomes eternal. God's decreed final penalty for sin is eternal separation from Him in the lake of fire which is called "the second death".

Revelation 20:12-15 (NASB95)

¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, **according to their deeds**. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **This is the second death, the lake of fire**. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Sinners usually deny their need for God's forgiveness by diminishing the holiness and justice of God and by magnifying their own goodness or merits. They wrongly think, "God is love, and a loving God would not send a good person like me to hell." But the Bible is clear that God is absolutely holy and just. He will punish all sin. His love does not mean that He sets aside His holiness or His justice. The Bible is also clear that we are far more sinful in God's presence than we ever imagined. Adam's guilt was imputed to us. After we are born, we quickly add our own sins to Adam's guilt and become alienated from God. We incur guilt by violating God's holy standards, both by our deeds and thoughts.

Being alienated from God, we need a **mediator** to reconcile us to Him. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. "**He is the mediator of a new covenant**". If you have ever been involved in a legal dispute, a mediator may help the two sides come to a satisfactory agreement. He listens to the terms of both sides and tries to work out a solution. Christ knew God's absolute holiness. He also knew man's enormous debt of sin. Christ took on human flesh, lived in complete conformity to God's holy standards, and then offered Himself as the price of redemption that God's justice demands. In so doing, He brought both sides together.

Sometimes people wonder how those who lived before Christ were saved. The answer is, they were saved in the same way that we are saved, through faith in the shed blood of Christ. They did not foresee Christ dying on the cross, but the sacrifices that they offered symbolized or pictured the sacrifice of Christ who would offer Himself as their substitute as prophesied by Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:5-11 (NASB95)

⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

...¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

Thus the Old Testament sacrifices postponed the penalty for sins until Christ paid for them at the cross. The salvation of the saints before Christ was, so to speak, on credit, until Christ paid the bill. Paul says the same thing...

Romans 3:23-26 (NASB95)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as

a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

The fact that everyone is a sinner in need of God's forgiveness means that you can offer the gospel to every person knowing that it is "**the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes**". You may feel intimidated because the person you are talking to is highly educated and intelligent. He may launch off into philosophy or science to try to prove that there is no God. Do not be threatened. Just keep in mind that this guy is a sinner who is going to die and stand before a holy God. He needs a mediator to reconcile him to God before that day. Jesus Christ is the only such mediator. His shed blood is the price of redemption for sinners who trust in Him.

II. Our Sins are Forgiven Because of the Shedding of Blood.

Romans 6:23 (NASB95)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the Old Testament, God explains why blood must be shed:

Leviticus 17:11 (NASB95)

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

God's justice demands the payment of the penalty, which is death. In His mercy, He will accept the death of an acceptable substitute in place of the death of the sinner. The system of animal sacrifices under the old covenant pictured and pointed ahead to Christ, the lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

Note three things:

A. Sin Leads to Physical and Spiritual Death.

God told Adam and Eve that in the day that they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die. But when they ate of the fruit they did not drop dead that day, **did they?** At the moment that they ate of the fruit, they died spiritually. Previously, they had enjoyed intimate fellowship with God, with no barriers between them. But instantly they were alienated from Him and tried to hide themselves from His holy presence.

On that same day, the process of physical death set in. Although those early humans lived for hundreds of years, they all died. Their bodies became subject to aging and disease. Sin resulted in death through murder and war. All of the ugly horrors of the world, whether the ravages of disease, the atrocities of crime, terrorism, and war, or the environmental devastation of the world's resources, are the result of sin.

Sin is at the root of all of the physical death in the world. And sin results in every person being spiritually dead, alienated from the life of God.

B. Blood Graphically Pictures the Exorbitant Price for Sin.

The word “blood” occurs six times in verses 18-22, plus “death” or “dead” three times in verses 15-17. Have you ever thought about how gory and messy the Jewish religion was? Everything was sprinkled with blood. The priests slaughtered dozens and sometimes hundreds or thousands of animals at the altar. They took bowls full of blood and sprinkled it on the altar. The carcasses were burned on the altar, so that the smell would have been constant and overwhelming. In our culture today we buy meat pre-cut and shrink-wrapped in cellophane at the grocery store. To be transported back in time and witness the sacrifices at the tabernacle would be a shocking experience for most of us. The blood graphically pictured the exorbitant price for sin.

C. Death is the Penalty for Sin.

The author mentions details in **verse 19** that are not included in the account in **Exodus 24**. There is no mention there of goats, water, scarlet wool, hyssop, or the sprinkling of the book. Other texts mention some of these things in other rituals. The author is probably grouping up all of these rituals into one or relying on oral tradition since he is dealing with the general subject of all things in the Old Testament being cleansed by blood. But, his point is found in **verse 22**, “**according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood**” The exception was that a poor man could offer a grain offering instead of an animal sacrifice. But the exception did not negate the rule, that “**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**” God was making the point that death is His decreed penalty for our sins.

Thus every person needs forgiveness of sins. God’s uniform method for the forgiveness of sins has been the shedding of blood.

III. The Death of Jesus Inaugurated the New Covenant with Blood.

Jesus’ blood, of course, is a figure of speech referring to His death. While Jesus’ physical sufferings were bloody and awful, it was what He went through spiritually that redeemed us from the curse of the Law. This is how Paul put it...

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB95)

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ’s worst agony on the cross was to be separated from the Father as He bore our punishment.

In **verses 16-17**, the author uses the analogy of a last will and testament to show that forgiveness comes to us as heirs of Christ and that forgiveness comes to us through His blood.

A. Forgiveness Comes to Us as Heirs of Christ.

To receive an inheritance, you have to be included in the will, and the person making the will must die. **Verse 15** in our text says “**those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**” The emphasis here is not on men calling upon God, but on God’s calling of men. In other words, He is the owner of the estate, and He makes up the will, and chooses the heirs. He has a specific list, **not** a sign-up sheet. But once the will has been drawn up, it is not put into effect until the death of the one making the will.

So the question you need to answer is, “Have you heard God’s call in the gospel and responded with faith in Jesus’ death?” He died to inaugurate the benefits of the will for the heirs. If you are an heir of Christ through faith in His blood, you have the benefit of forgiveness that His death secured.

B. Forgiveness Comes only Through the Blood of Christ.

If there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood, then the opposite is also true: with the shedding of blood, there is forgiveness! We would not associate sprinkling blood on things as cleansing them as found in **verses 13 and 22** of our text, but rather, as staining them. If you have ever gotten blood on a nice shirt, you know that you need to rinse it out quickly or it will permanently stain your shirt. To think of taking blood and sprinkling the book, the people, the tabernacle, and all the sacred vessels seems like it would dirty them, not cleanse them.

But modern medicine (of which the ancient Hebrews had no clue) has revealed how accurate it is to speak of the cleansing property of blood.

God designed this as a beautiful picture to show that just as blood cleanses our bodies from poisons, so the blood of Christ, applied to our hearts by faith, cleanses our souls from the poison of sin that we all need. Have you applied it to your soul? It is God’s only way for forgiveness of sins.

CONCLUSION:

OK. You may not remember anything that I have said up to this point. But I want you to listen very carefully to what I have left to say. If you want to have salvation through the blood of Christ, here is what it all boils down to.

We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are all sinners! None of us can claim salvation for ourselves from what we have done on our own. We all know the ways of the deeds of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 (HCSB)

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: **sexual immorality**, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, **drunkenness**, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance—as I told you before—that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Are you willingly doing the deeds of the flesh? If you are, your sins cannot be covered by the blood of Christ.

So what must I do? I want God's forgiveness!

We must allow our **minds** to be transformed!

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB95)

¹² Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.* ² And **do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

If we have not been transformed by the renewing of our mind then we are telling God that we consider Christ's death on the cross to be foolishness and we will continue to enjoy the temporary ways of this world and continue to willfully sin. Both the old testament and new testament tells us that willful sin cannot be forgiven.

Hebrews 10:26-27 (NASB95)

²⁶ **For if we go on sinning willfully** after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

When we continue to sin willfully by practicing the deeds of the flesh, the blood of Christ cannot cleanse us of that sin.

You say...**I KNOW that! BUT** I enjoy the sin and it seems that it is impossible to quit doing it. How can I quit doing it?

Well, the scriptures say that we are to take up our cross and follow Jesus.

What does that actually mean?

The scriptures tell us that the cross (the cross that we are to take up) is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles and the perishing.

It means that we MUST truly believe that Christ's death on the cross is NOT foolishness. That it is only through Christ's blood that we can be saved. When we continue to **willfully** sin by engaging ourselves in the deeds of the flesh, we are telling God that we do not truly believe! By our actions we are demonstrating to God that you consider Christ's death as foolishness.

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

You see the pleasures of this world are only temporary. When we "**take up our cross**" and follow Jesus, we understand that our love of sin is only a temporary pleasure and it keeps us separated from God. It is only when we truly believe that our salvation can only come through Christ and His death is not foolishness that we can be "transformed by the renewing of our mind". And the Holy Spirit, with all of His power, will dwell within you and give you the strength to do the will of God and avoid the things of this world. The very thing that seems impossible for us to do! This has eternal value and you can live with God forever.

Matthew 7:13-14 (NASB95)

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

To walk the narrow path requires a real commitment to serve God. We are so convinced that Christ's death on the cross is not foolishness that we desire to completely avoid the temporary pleasures of this world and seek Christ's righteousness within us.

At judgment we will hear one of two things.

Matthew 7:23 (NASB95)

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

And you will say "Lord" I prayed to you and went to church, bible study, Sunday school, youth group, and did communion remembering what you did for me and was even baptized as you commanded me to do. I did a lot of good things! How can you say that you never knew me?

And He will say. You were unwilling to fully surrender yourself to me. You never were transformed by the renewing of you mind. You considered my spilt blood on the cross to be foolishness and continued to willingly sin against me. Therefore my blood was unable to cleanse you and place my righteousness within you and now you are facing me in judgment with your sins. I am sorry, but I must declare you guilty. Thus you must depart from me because "I never knew you".

But if you are willing to surrender yourself to Christ and take up our cross and follow Him, He will have a much better message for you.

Matthew 25:21b (NASB95)

...Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

What a day that will be! While you were on this earth you despised the things of this world and you stored up treasures in heaven and now you can receive the gift of eternal life with God in all of His glory.

Be among the FEW and follow the NARROW path that leads to eternal life!

Go Tell it on the Mountain