



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

### Sermon Notes

### *Our Eternal Inheritance*

Hebrews 9:15-22

October 11, 2009

<sup>15</sup>Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. <sup>16</sup>For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. <sup>17</sup>For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. <sup>18</sup>Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. <sup>19</sup>For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup>saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." <sup>21</sup>And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

- ❖ On April 26 of this year, the NBC program *Dateline*, in a segment entitled "You Might Be Rich" told the story of Madison, Wisconsin man, identified only as Nick. Nick is a 55 year old single man with few living relatives, as his mother passed away in 2003, and his uncle shortly thereafter. Nick's life has been a very difficult one. Furthermore, in 2005, Nick was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, and as a result he was no longer able to work at his job as a Grocery store clerk at the local supermarket. To make matters worse, Nick has no medical insurance.
- ❖ However, this year, thanks to the work of the producers of *Dateline*, it was discovered that Nick, although financially destitute, was the legal heir to a small fortune. In fact, when his mother and uncle passed away less than five years ago, they left him nearly \$500,000, collectively, in their respective wills. One can only imagine the surprise of this man when he found out that he had an inheritance that would allow him to not only pay his debts, but live a comfortable life.

- ❖ Yet, the concept of inheritance – or a will for that matter – is nothing new. In fact, the idea of a will and an associated inheritance is central to the theme of Hebrews 9:15-22.
- ❖ Further, not only is the concept of a will central to this text; but few passages in the Book of Hebrews get to the heart of the Gospel better than this very passage.
- ❖ The author articulates the Gospel message by clearly establishing four points:

- 1. The Mosaic Law Establishes the Standard of Righteousness**
- 2. Violation of the Old Covenant Demands Death**
- 3. The Death of Christ Inaugurated a New Covenant**
- 4. All Who are Called by God Receive an Eternal Inheritance**

**I. The Mosaic Law Establishes the Standard of Righteousness**

*since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*

- The first point that is important to understand in this passage is emphasized in **Verse 15**.
- That is, that the first covenant, the Mosaic Covenant in this context, establishes the standard of righteousness.
  - In fact, the Mosaic Covenant, particularly the Ten Commandments, are a personal reflection of the very nature of God.
  - Consequently, to transgress or violate the first/Old Covenant is to personally violate God Himself.
  - Thus, the Old Covenant is still very relevant in the lives of believers today.
  - In fact, we know what sin is by understanding the Old Covenant.
- Yet, tragically, man falls woefully short of God’s standard of righteousness, as revealed in the Mosaic (first) covenant.
- Consider the words of Philip Hughes:

“The inability of man to keep [the law’s] demands made unmistakably clear his guilty state before God. Man’s great and radical need is justification; but the law can never justify the law-breaker. Despairing of his efforts to achieve righteousness by his works,

man's only hope was to turn away from himself and to seek the refuge of faith in the pardoning grace which he had been promised. Thus 'the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith' (Galatians 3:23)."

## II. Violation of the Old Covenant Demands Death

*since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*

- God is certainly a God of love; however, He is also a God of justice, and if He is to keep from violating His nature, He must punish sin.
- This is why the author states that "**a death has occurred** that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant."

**Ezekiel 18:4:** "Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die."

**Romans 6:23:** "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- God's justice demands that sin be punished. If God failed to judge sin, He would violate His own nature.
- Tragically, though, few professing Christians understand the dread and horror of sin.
- To God, however, all sin is a personal affront to Him. As the King of all Creation, sin amounts to "cosmic treason." It is impossible for us to comprehend the true gravity of sin from the perspective of Almighty God.
- This past Friday, when I was driving to go and visit Carol Sutton in the hospital, I stopped to get some gas. As I was pulling into the gas station, a man in a truck pulled in in front of me. He immediately got out of his truck as I got out to pump gas, and he said, "Sir, could you please spare a few dollars, I am completely out of gas." I then reached into my wallet and gave him a five dollar bill. But then, after thanking me, he went into Jack's Grocery, came out with something in his hand, and quickly drove off.
  - ❑ Interestingly, I felt so violated. I was so upset about losing the five dollars, I considered speeding off and trying to track down the man (I am still not sure what I would have done had I caught up with him!). I thought about the incident all today (and I am still thinking about it).
  - ❑ Yet, how much more is violating the one who gave us life and promises us eternity with Him!

- Therefore, as any transgression against an infinitely holy God is infinitely “horrific,” death is the only appropriate punishment.
- Ray Stedman writes concerning the blood requirement for atonement: “It was meant to impress on them that sin cannot be set aside, even by a loving God, without a death occurring. His judicial sentence, ‘the soul who sins is the one who will die’ (Ezekiel 18:4), must be carried out.’
- Andrew Murray concurs: “God is willing to received man back again to His fellowship, to admit him to His heart and His love, to make a covenant with him, to give full assurance of all this; but – not without blood. Even His own Son, the Almighty and All-perfect One, the gift of His eternal love, even He could only redeem us, and enter the Father’s presence, in submission to the word, not without blood. But, blessed be God, the blood of the Son of God, in which there was the life of the Eternal Spirit, has been given, and has wrought an eternal redemption! He did, indeed, bear our sins and take them away. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. . . There can be no fellowship with God, but in the blood, in the death, of His blessed Son.”

### III. The Death of Christ Inaugurated a New Covenant

*since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. <sup>16</sup>For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. <sup>17</sup>For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. <sup>18</sup>Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. <sup>19</sup>For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup>saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” <sup>21</sup>And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

- It is important to understand that although the author of Hebrews speaks of the New Covenant, and its superiority to the Old, this New Covenant was really nothing new.
- In fact, the Old Testament writers spoke of it in, for example, **Jeremiah 31:34**: “<sup>31</sup>Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup>not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be

my people. <sup>34</sup>And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

- According to the author of Hebrews, the New Covenant is a far better covenant than the Old. Consider his reasoning:
  - Christ served in a greater tabernacle (Verse 11);
  - Christ offered Himself – an infinitely greater sacrifice (Verses 11, 14);
  - Christ entered into a greater sanctuary (Verse 12);
  - Christ secured a greater redemption (Verse 12);
  - Christ, the High Priest and Sacrifice, was empowered by the Holy Spirit (Verse 14);
  - Christ achieved a greater cleansing (of the conscience) (Verse 14);
  - Christ’s work leads all of God’s people into a greater (priestly) service (Verse 14).
  
- Yet, our author makes it clear that before the New Covenant could be inaugurated, a death had to occur, for he says, “*where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.*”
  - The Greek word translated “**will**” in this Verse is *diatheke*, which is also the word for **covenant**.
  
  - A **covenant** is a solemn, binding agreement between two parties.
  
  - However, here, in Hebrews 9, the author employs a sort of word-play, demonstrating a double meaning of the Greek word *diatheke*. In fact, this is the only time in the entire New Testament where this Greek word is translated “**will**.”
  
  - Consequently, what the author is doing is showing that **the New Covenant is a Last Will and Testament** (in fact, this is why we refer to the first 39 books of the Bible as the “Old Testament” and the last 27 books as the “New Testament”).
  
  - Therefore, just as a **Will** is not activated until the person who wrote the will dies, so the benefits of the **New Covenant** are not “distributed” until Christ, the Head of the New Covenant, dies.

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- As with all aspects of Christ’s atoning life, the Old Testament anticipated the death of Christ, which would inaugurate the New Covenant.

**Leviticus 17:11:** “<sup>11</sup>For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.”

- Not only this, but Christ Himself looked to the establishment of the New Covenant, as he shared in the Last Supper with His disciples:
  - **Matthew 26:28:** “<sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (see also Mark 14:24)
  - **1 Corinthians 11:25:** “<sup>25</sup>In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’”

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- Our author also shows the consistency between the Old and New Covenants, stating that the Old Covenant was also inaugurated with a death.

*<sup>18</sup>Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. <sup>19</sup>For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, <sup>20</sup>saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." <sup>21</sup>And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. <sup>22</sup>Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

- This passage recalls the ratification of the first covenant – the Mosaic Covenant – originally recorded in Exodus 24. In this Chapter, Moses reads the entire Law, and the people respond, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do” (Exodus 24:3).
- The next day, though, Moses offered sacrifices to the LORD, this inaugurating and ratifying this covenant:

“<sup>6</sup>And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup>Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.’ <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

- Ray Stedman again comments, “By sprinkling the blood of an animal on the people, Moses is saying that God would accept that substitution as a temporary reprieve until the true Substitute should come.”

- And we praise God that the true Substitute has come!
- It seems that King David, after his sin with Bathsheba, looked forward to the true Substitute, the day which *has* come, saying, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Psalm 51:7)

**IV. All Who Are Called By God Receive an Eternal Inheritance**

<sup>15</sup>*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance,*

- Finally, we see that the heart of this passage is that truth that Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and it is not simply that our sins are forgiven, but we have an eternal inheritance in Him.
- As the **Mediator** of the New Covenant, Christ becomes the “bridge” between the two parties – God and sinful man.
  - In this respect, Christ is **Jacob’s Ladder**, Genesis 28:10-12: “<sup>12</sup>And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!”
  - This is fulfilled in John 1:51: “<sup>51</sup>And he said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

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- Yet, this passage speaks of more than Christ’s mediation, it speaks of our inheritance.
  - This calls to mind the Abrahamic Covenant, for Christ’s work fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant.

**Genesis 17:6-8**: “<sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup>And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup>And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

- The inheritance associated with the Abrahamic Covenant was land. However, the New Covenant that Christ has inaugurated promises an inheritance that is far greater than land – for it is eternal.

- ❑ **Yet, as we have seen already, before we could receive the blessings of the New Covenant, our fundamental problem – sin – had to be dealt with.**

A.W. Pink comments, “[Christ] has delivered us from the curse of the law and the bondage of sin; He has also procured for us an ‘eternal inheritance’: His satisfaction has merited for us the favor and image of God and everlasting bliss in His presence.”

- ❑ From this truth it is evident that the New Covenant involves *much more* than simply forgiveness of sins.
- ❑ Therefore, an understanding of **justification** is essential for understanding this passage.
- ❑ Christ not only deals with our sin, taking it upon Himself; but, the merits of His obedient life, and their associated blessings are attributed to our account.
- ❑ And this is the heart of the gospel: **We not only receive forgiveness of sins, but we receive an eternal and infinite inheritance!**

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- ❑ And so the question becomes, “What is the nature of our inheritance?”

1 Peter 1:3-5: “<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup>to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

- ❑ From this passage, it is clear that our inheritance is in heaven...indeed, it is heaven.
- ❑ In short, we receive – in this life and the next – God’s **Presence, Protection, and Provision**.
- ❑ In other words, even now, we have the Presence of God with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God providentially watches over us and protects us from our greatest enemies – the enemies of darkness. Yet, when we die physically, we will be in the immediate presence of Almighty God, with no more enemies (for they will be destroyed), and God will bless us as He blesses Christ.
- ❑ In fact, all believers receive the inheritance of Abraham, an inheritance far greater than mere physical land:

Galatians 3:29: “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”



- ❑ However, consider the author’s use of the concept of a *will*. With Christ’s death and resurrection (and ascension), the will has been read and executed.
- ❑ And with this, **all** of the blessings of Christ are ours! The treasury of the God who created the entire universe out of nothing has been opened and poured out on us!

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- ❑ The ten wealthiest men in the world have a combined net worth of nearly a half a trillion dollars.

1	Warren Buffett	\$62 Billion
2	Carlos Slim Helu & family	\$60 Billion
3	William Gates III	\$58 Billion
4	Lakshmi Mittal	\$45 Billion
5	Mukesh Ambani	\$43 Billion
6	Anil Ambani	\$42 Billion
7	Ingvar Kamprad & family	\$31 Billion
8	KP Singh	\$30 Billion
9	Oleg Deripaska	\$28 Billion
10	Karl Albrecht	\$27 Billion

- ❑ Yet, this does not even begin to compare to the wealth that God will bestow upon the rightful heirs of Abraham (that is, those who believe in Christ).
- ❑ In conclusion, consider the events surrounding the death of Julius Caesar, as written by the great William Shakespeare:

Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C., and the consul of Rome, Mark Antony, delivered his funeral address. The members of the senate who were responsible for Caesar’s death did not permit Mark Antony to incite the crowds; however, they did allow him to offer a eulogy.

And this is how it famously began: “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.”

But, then, Antony proceeded to do just that: praise Caesar. Antony recounted Caesar’s successes and what he had done for the sake of not only Rome, but for the poor and unfortunate as well.

Then, as Antony spoke, he did something interesting, he held up a document and said, “Here’s a parchment with the seal of Caesar. I found it in his closet; ‘tis his will.” The crowd responded, “We’ll hear the will!”

Then, Mark Antony gathered the people around the lifeless body of Julius Caesar and began to read the will. “If you have tears,” he said, “prepare to shed them now.” Antony then pointed to the wounds of Caesar and named those who assassinated him, attributing the wounds to them.

Then, Antony opened the will and read:

“To every Roman citizen he gives...seventy-five drachmas...Moreover, he hath left you all his walks, his private arbors, and new-planted orchards, on the side Tiber; he hath left them you, and to your heirs forever – common pleasures, to walk abroad and recreate yourselves.”

At this very moment, the crowd erupted and ran the conspirators out of the city.

Caesar had left each Roman citizen two and a half months of wages. And as a result, the people responded in gratitude.

- Yet, how much more is the wealth of our King than that of Julius Caesar’s! And in his Last Will and Testament – the New Testament – He promises us all the treasures of heaven (which our minds cannot even comprehend.
- As such, the appropriate response is nothing less than what the great hymn writer, Isaac Watts states in his classic hymn, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*:

“Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!”