

Hebrews Chapter 9A

I think we could all agree that feelings of guilt are a universal phenomenon.

The pangs of conscience have affected all men in every culture throughout all time.

- One evidence of this fact can be seen in the variety of approaches both religious and psychological that human beings employ in an effort to deal with their feelings of guilt.
- Because man was created in the image of God as a moral being, his conscience sounds an alarm when the divine law, written upon his heart is broken.
 - We have all been awakened by the cries of this alarm.
- It was the heavy pangs of conscience that caused Adam and Eve to scurry through the Garden seeking something, anything with which to cover themselves after partaking of the forbidden fruit.

And contrary to the familiar adage that, "*Time Heals All Wounds*," I can tell you from personal experience that time does not relieve the burden of guilt when we sin against our creator.

- We may harden our hearts, or as Paul says, "**suppress the truth in unrighteousness**" but putting our fingers in our ears does not relieve or remove our guilt.

(*For Example*) Many years after selling their brother Joseph off into slavery the Sons of Jacob were stricken with guilt when unawares they faced their long lost brother in the land of Egypt: (*listen to what they said to each other when he left the room*)

Genesis 42: 21 "**In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.**" 22 **And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."**

- There is no measure of time, no system of therapy, no self-justification that is able to erase the stain of sin that plagues the conscience with guilt.
- And there are times when our conscience can afflict us like a dreadful illness.
- Remember how David described the weight of guilt that he wrestled with after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. (In Ps 32)

Psalm 32: 3 **For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.** 4 **For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah**

Listen to John Calvin's explanation of David's struggle with his conscience:

"Whether David was silent, or whether he attempted to heighten his grief by his crying and even roaring, his bones waxed old; in other words, his whole strength withered away. From this it follows, that whithersoever the sinner may turn himself, or however he may

be mentally affected, his malady is in no degree lightened, nor his welfare in any degree promoted, until he is restored to the favor of God.”

Finally, when the grace of God that leads men to repentance and saving faith is withheld by the sovereign hand of God the weight of guilt leads finally and eternally to destruction. We see this displayed in the life of Judas Iscariot.

Matthew 27:3 Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." 5 And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.

- The guilt of Judas’ treachery against Jesus drove him quickly to a violent suicide. Seeing the deadly extreme of a guilty conscience I have to ask:
- HOW am I to do about my guilty conscience?

This morning I hope to show you how the crimson thread, that trail of blood which flows throughout the entire Bible leads believers to the blessing of a clear conscience.

Here is the Outline I have prepared to help us follow the trail of blood.

- First we will observe the Primitive Sacrifice
- Next we will press on to the Prescribed Sacrifice
- Finally we will look at the Primary Sacrifice

1 The Primitive Sacrifice

Genesis 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

- By Faith, bringing a blood sacrifice before the Lord Abel found grace in God’s sight

Genesis 8:20 Noah built an ALTAR and offered sacrifices to God.

Genesis 12 and 13 Abram built an altar and worshipped the Lord offering primitive sacrifices that pointed forward to the Sacrifices that were yet to come.

- But the most notable sacrifice offered by Abraham was one that pointed to the Primary sacrifice.
- In Genesis 22 Abraham laid his one and only son on the altar before the Lord in effect receiving him back from the dead.

In and of themselves these Primitive Sacrifices had no ability to cleanse the guilty conscience they were effective only as they pointed people to the one who was to come, the one who WOULD remove sin and restore man to fellowship with God.

- As we follow the blood through the pages of Scripture we move from the Primitive to the Prescribed Sacrifice; From the Patriarchs to the Law and in doing so we return to our study in the book of Hebrews.

2 The Prescribed Sacrifice

Hebrews 9:1 **Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.**

- In the “First Covenant” God prescribed certain sacrifices and a central location in which those sacrifices were to take place.
- Although the sanctuary and its worship were divinely instituted they were specifically designed to be temporary. We saw that in

Hebrews 8:13 **In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

Here in Hebrews 9 the author describes the Tabernacle, that place where the Worship, prescribed by the Old Covenant took place.

The courtyard of the Tabernacle was 150 feet long and 75 wide. It had one large gate on the eastern side where worshippers were able to enter.

- All of Israel was welcomed into this outer court.
- This is where they brought their offerings, their sacrifices to God.
- And the first article of furniture that one would encounter as he walked into the outer court was the bronze altar.
 - This was the place where sacrificial blood was spilled for the sin of the worshippers.
- Next you would come upon the bronze Laver. This is where the priests would wash their hands and sometimes their feet because they were bloodied from the multitude of sacrifices.
- The outer court is where the Israelites gathered in hopes of having their consciences cleansed.

Moving from the outer court to the inner court we enter the Holy Place where ONLY the Priests were permitted to go.

Hebrews 9: 2 **For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place.**

- It was the responsibility of the Priests daily to maintain the oil in the lampstand and keep the altar of incense burning. Weekly the priests would change the bread on the table of showbread....
- Every article of furniture and every ritual performed within the Tabernacle provided an image, a shadow of the Messiah who was to come.

Verses 3 – 5 move us from the Holy Place within the Tabernacle into the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies where ONLY the High Priest was permitted to go.

Hebrews 9: 3 Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, 4 having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

- The description of all these furnishings would have held great significance and aroused fond memories within the Hebrew believers who were hearing the words of this epistle.
- But remember, the writer of this book has been laboring diligently to show the superiority of Christ.
- Here in Chapter 9 the Author follows the crimson thread of blood to show us how the Prescribed Sacrifices of the Tabernacle could NOT remove guilt, they needed a better sacrifice.
- To prove this he takes us into the Holy of Holies where the blood of the sacrifice was poured out for the sin of the people.

Hebrews 9: 6 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, 7 but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

- With these words the writer describes the Day of Atonement, that One Day each year where the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice to atone for the unintentional sins of the people.
- And as glorious as this Day of Atonement was; the blood of the bull, the offering of a goat was insufficient to remove the guilt of the people.
- Let's look more closely at TWO of the insufficiencies:

First: As wonderful as these sacrifices were they failed to provide the worshippers with access to the presence of God. As long as the Temple remained standing the veil of separation remained intact.

Hebrews 9: 8 By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing

- The fact that the crowd of worshippers remained on the outside of the Tent, forbidden to enter was a clear reminder that their sin STILL separated them from God.
- The blood of bulls and goats only covered the unintentional sins of the people and only for the previous year. All future sins and all intentional sins (rebellion) were not covered by the sacrifice on the day of atonement.
- And that naturally leads us to the second point:

Second: The fleshly nature of the sacrifice was never able to truly cleanse the conscience of the worshipper.

Hebrews 9: 9 (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, 10 but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

- The “Present Age” Is that time in which the Temple stood, the time when the Mosaic sacrifices described for us continued to be offered. (3-5 more years)
- These Old Covenant sacrifices by their imperfect nature only deal with, only touch, only effect the flesh of man, they don’t effect the (inner) Soul & Spirit.

BUT The good news is this: the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ brought about what the Author calls “The Time of Reformation.” And that reformation moves us from the Prescribed Sacrifices to the “Primary Sacrifice.”

3 The Primary Sacrifice

I call this the “Primary Sacrifice” because it is the sacrifice to which all of the other sacrifices pointed:

- Both the Primitive and the Prescribed Sacrifices prophetically looked forward to the Primary Sacrifice that would be effective in cleansing the conscience of man and provide access to the presence of God for all who repent of their sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9: 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)

- Jesus Christ Our High Priest entered the true Tabernacle, the heavenly Tabernacle (*not made with hands*) and presented himself, His death in atonement for the transgressions of His people. (Better Sanctuary)

12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

- “Once and for all” STANDS OUT as a clear comparison to the Old Covenant’s continual sacrifices that were offered by the Levitical priest.
- The superiority of Christ’s blood provides for those who believe an eternal redemption which purifies not only the outer man (body / flesh) but also the inner man (the conscience.)

So the question that we ask this morning is this:

- How was Jesus’ sacrifice different from the Animal sacrifices? How does His sacrifice actually purify our conscience?

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

- The Prescribed sacrifices were able to make a man “Ceremonially Clean” so that he could join His brothers in worshipping to God of Israel.
- But the effectiveness of the sacrifice was only temporary and completely external.
- The superior sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God provided men with an eternal redemption of the Whole man. (Body, soul and spirit is redeemed forever)

Listen, this is important: The freedom of your conscience depends on this: The death of Jesus Christ provided a better sacrifice because it effected the WHOLE man.

- His blood was not simply sprinkled on the outside of a man, like the Prescribed Sacrifice, no it flowed over the whole man cleansing Him inside and out.

Hebrews 9: 14 *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

- Jesus offered His sacrifice “*Through the Eternal Spirit*” without blemish to God.

Take notice in this verse that ALL THREE persons of the Godhead are working together to bring about the redemption of God’s treasured people.

- The sacrifice of Christ was presented to God the Father by Jesus Christ who was empowered by the Holy Spirit to *offer himself without blemish to God.*

What was the work of the Spirit?

- Jesus lived a sinless life (BY the Spirit,) Jesus did miraculous works (BY the Spirit) Jesus endured the penalty of our sin on the cross (BY the Spirit)
- In those last 3 hours on the cross Jesus bore the penalty for our sin; in his body and in his spirit he absorbed every drop of the wrath of an infinitely holy God.

He was able to cleanse our conscience because, there is an immeasurable difference in value and worth between the sacrifice of a bull or goat and the sacrifice of the eternal Son of God.

- And it is the infinite value and worth of Christ’s sacrifice that cleanses our conscience from dead works.

The suffering that Christ endured effected every part of HIS person, Because of that His atonement is able to affect every part of OUR person. (body, soul, spirit)

His perfect sacrifice is applied to us both spiritually and physically So that we are FREE to enjoy unbroken fellowship with God who is Spirit.

- By faith in His atoning sacrifice we become new creatures, spiritually alive!
- The veil of separation is removed! Now through Christ we may come to the throne of grace.

Finally let's consider the application that is provided by the Author of Hebrews:

The blood of Christ offered without blemish to God, **purifies our conscience from dead works (SO THAT WE ARE ABLE TO) serve the Living God.** (Vs. 14)

- Our life of joyful, loving service to God comes as a result of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.
 - As we close I would like you to see GOD'S purpose in giving us such a sensitive conscience in the first place.

If it were not for the heavy weight of guilt, under which my soul languished for years I would NOT have known my desperate need for a Redeemer.

- It was the ALARM of conscience that awakened me to my need for grace.
- God in his mercy revealed his holiness to me through His Word and as I considered the wonder of His beauty I saw the darkness and ugliness of my own soul.
- When the weight of Guilt had nearly crushed me, he wonderfully revealed His Grace and mercy lifting me to new life.

He became irresistible to me, like a cool glass of water in a desert land, like a healing salve to blind man.

And like a skilled physician he removed the malignancy of corruption from my inner man, washing me cleansing me delivering me from the jaws of death

Guilt gave way to Grace and Grace gave way to Gratitude!

- I found myself worshipping God and not just with my lips but with my life!

If you are wasting away in a sea of guilt this morning, I encourage you to lift your eyes off of yourself and look to the hills:

Psalm 121:1, **I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?**

2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.: