

Only by Blood

Hebrews 9:15-22

Introduction

Our very nature as humans is to worship something or someone. Even if we choose to erase God from our worldview, we end up finding something or someone else to be what we love and trust and fear to lose most. We create ungodly things to fill the void of God, even if we insert ourselves into God's place, making ourselves the source and judge of truth and the chief purpose of life.

Same with religion and morals. Postmodernists who say there are no absolutes operate by a belief system, a dogma, and live by a set of moral rules, however individualized they may be. Of course, declaring there are no absolutes is an absolute statement itself.

If we take the Biblical worldview, we know we are made in the image of God to worship Him—or to put in terms of the catechism, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The problem is that *because of our fallen condition as sinners by birth and by choice, entering into a meaningful worship relationship with God escapes us.* We carry the guilt of our wrongdoings, and that very fact makes us reluctant to approach a

righteous, holy God. We also carry the resentments of wrongs committed against us. These make it hard to unite with others in worship. How do we get past those hurts to live free?

The gospel is all about recovering our created purpose and finding the fullness and joy we once knew as humans in the Garden of Eden. It tells us how God is restoring us to Himself through Christ so that we recover the joy of what it is to be human beings made in God's image. *It changes our past—forgiveness. It changes our future—eternal inheritance. It changes ourselves—regeneration.* And that's what the new covenant inaugurated by Christ Jesus is all about. All things new.

Our text this morning begins with the word *therefore*. Because Christ has purified our conscience from dead works to serve/worship the living God, He is the mediator—the high priest—of this new covenant.

15 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. **16** For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. **17** For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long

as the one who made it is alive. **18** Therefore not even the first [covenant] was inaugurated without blood. **19** 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, **20** saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." **21** And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. **22** Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Covenant or will (6x)—translates the same word. Unlike the Hebrew word for covenant, the Greek word for covenant can also be used to refer to a person's last will and testament. What we call the two parts of our Bible reflects this nuance of meaning. Our Bibles comprise the Old Testament and New Testament.

The writer of Hebrews uses this range of meaning—both a covenant and a will to make his point about the superior value of the new covenant that Jesus Christ established.

A divine covenant establishes a committed relationship between God and human beings.

It requires blood sacrifice, an innocent life given in place of a guilty life. Blood (6x)

A last testament and will requires the death of the one who's will it is for the heirs to receive their inheritance.

Death (3x)

Both the Old and New Covenants/Testaments are enacted only by blood. Lifeblood covers and cleanses from sin. Death is required for us to receive the inheritance of eternal life. Redemption is costly. Only by blood.

1. Christ had to die to redeem us from our transgressions (15).
2. Christ had to die to give us our inheritance (16-17).
3. Blood must be shed to purify worship (18-22a).
4. Blood must be shed to forgive sins (22b).

1. Christ had to die to redeem us from our transgressions (15).

¹⁵ 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.

This verse summarizes the scope of the benefits of the new covenant ratified by Christ for us.

Mediator—a person who serves as a go-between to bring together persons who have been at odds

What did it take to bring sinful human beings and a holy God together? Redemption. We must be redeemed.

To redeem—to buy back, to ransom; illus: pawn shop, kidnapper

Kinsman-redeemer (OT Book of Ruth)—a near kinsman could buy back a family member or buy back their inheritance for them
Costly. A price paid.

Reminds us that *sin not only breaks God's law. Sin traps us, enslaves us, owns us, exercises power over us.* When we are tempted to sin we tend to think we are exercising freedom when in reality we are giving it up.

Transgressions—to overstep (the boundary)
Like the days of the Iron Curtain—to go past the border into a totalitarian regime is to risk being trapped there.

Committed under the first covenant

The animal sacrifices only pointed to the real sacrifice that would actually buy them back from sin. The death of the Messiah. That was the redemption price to buy us back from our slavery to sin and the death penalty it demands.

The death of Christ is unique in that in dying for us Christ actually satisfied all the law's righteous demands on us. He fully absorbed the wrath of God. He paid our sin debt in full. For that reason, death had no more claim to make. It could not hold Jesus. After three days He rose again, certifying that the entire debt was paid. With the sin debt completely gone, death also cannot hold anyone who is in Christ by faith. He has redeemed us from the domination of sin and death.

But Jesus' mediating work does more than just a ransom us from the tyranny of our transgressions—a tyranny that consigns us to death itself. He rescues us to something infinitely valuable—a promised eternal inheritance. Our connection to Jesus frees us completely to the eternal inheritance God has promised His people.

“so that [purpose] those who are called [God's initiative to call out a people for His name] may receive the promised eternal inheritance”—future orientation

What good is it if a rich relative leaves you a vast estate if you are under a death sentence and can never enjoy it? The estate needs to be promised and preserved, but you need to be preserved too. Our text tells us that Christ's mediating work was to ensure that we receive the inheritance, not just that it was there for us.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ 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, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

It's strategically important for us to reflect often on the far-ranging cost and value of what Jesus has done for us.

So deep it cleanses us from our sin plague.
So strong it breaks the iron grip of death and hell.

So long it welcomes us into an eternal inheritance.

So costly that only the blood and death of the God-man Savior-King Jesus Christ could pay the ransom price.

The reference to our inheritance leads us to consider the other meaning of the term translated covenant—a will.

2. Christ had to die to give us our inheritance (16-17).

¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.

¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

The promised inheritance is the estate that rightfully belongs to God the Son. By dying, Jesus bequeathed it to us. His perfect obedience to God's law merited heaven and eternity, the restoration of a perfect universe. He has made us heirs of his kingdom.

Colossians 2:12-13

¹² Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

He had to die to make it ours. Only by blood.

When the Queen of Sheba visited the kingdom of Solomon, she declared in amazement, "The half had not been told." When we finally enter our inheritance, we will no doubt have the same reaction.

So don't give up. Don't despair. This is the hard part. This is the only "hell" you will ever experience if you belong to Jesus. The best is yet to come.

3. Blood must be shed to purify worship (18-21).

¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." ²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ^{22a} Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood.

Both Old and New Covenants were established by blood.

Remember what the shed blood communicated: there had to be an innocent life sacrificed to pay the sin debt of a guilty life in order to enter into a worship relationship with God. His holiness demanded it. So everything connected to worship had to be purified with blood.

The book of the covenant itself.
The people of the covenant.

The tent where they met with God.
The vessels that were used in worship.
Under the law almost everything is purified
with blood.
*The plague of our sin has infected every part
of our lives and corrupts even our worship.
The blood of the sacrifice must cleanse us if
we are ever to truly have fellowship with God,
if we are ever to truly worship Him.*

Hebrews 9:13-14

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.

Serve—liturgy; the service of worship
This is why we start our worship services with confession. Not that a brief time of confession on Sunday morning is the only time you should ever confess your sins. That should happen all week long, whenever you know you've sinned against God. The point is that sin bars us from genuine worship. We want to acknowledge our sin before God so that we can engage in worship from the heart.

You can't really worship God from the heart if you are carrying a load of sin guilt. It all

becomes a charade if you are. True worship expresses love for God. We want to be close to people we love. Same with God. But you can't get close to Him if your sin is in the way. The cleansing of Christ's blood opens the way for you to get close to God to worship Him. And it lets you enjoy the connection with other true worshipers of God.

The mark of blood-cleansed people is loving unity with God and with one another.

1 John 1:7-10

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Walking in the light, enjoying the fellowship of the saints, results from the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. His blood actually cleanses us and frees us to love and worship God as we should, creating a common bond with other believers.

One of the telltale signs that you are not right with God is that your relationship with other

believers is disrupted. Sin mars our relationship with God and with human beings. Cleansing from sin purifies our consciences and our lives in a way that restores and reconnects what sin had broken. None of us are here worshiping because we deserve it. We are not better than anyone else. We are here by grace alone—purchased for us by the blood of Christ.

Beware a bloodless religion, even if it calls itself Christianity. It is a futile exercise in self-righteousness. And it is powerless to save or sanctify. Manmade worship will never get you to God. Only by blood—the blood of Jesus.

4. Blood must be shed to forgive sins (22b).

22b and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

We've looked at the internal purifying of our consciences. This focuses on acquitting us of the judicial consequences of our crimes against God and our fellow man.

Why is this? Because God is righteous. God is just. He would cease to be so if He just ignored our sin and looked the other way. Any judge that does that with a criminal would be considered an unjust judge. So how can God preserve His righteousness and at the same time forgive us of sin?

Romans 3:20-26

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

“Propitiation by his blood”—satisfaction of the wrath of God against sin—only by blood, the blood of Jesus Christ.

There’s nothing more for you to add. “Jesus paid it all.” God’s justice is satisfied. That’s why we can sing, “No guilt in life, no fear in death—this is the power of Christ in me.”

And we sing, “This the power of the cross, Son of God slain for us. What a love, what a cost! We stand forgiven at the cross.”

Conclusion

1. Christ had to die to redeem us from our transgressions (15).
2. Christ had to die to give us our inheritance (16-17).
3. Blood must be shed to purify worship (18-22a).
4. Blood must be shed to forgive sins (22b).

This is the good news of the new covenant. Have you received it? Do you believe it? Are you experiencing it? It's a gift from God through Jesus alone. He bought it for you at the price of His blood. Only by blood.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some evidences you have seen that demonstrate that human beings by nature must worship someone or something?
2. How does knowing we're made in the image of God to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever shed light on why worshiping God from the heart can be so pleasurable for us? What is the connection between God's created purpose for us and our happiness?
3. In practical terms not just theological, what have you found interferes with

your experiencing true worship of God from the heart?

4. Redemption points to Christ's buying us back and setting us free from our sin. What does that tell you about what sin does to us? How have you seen that play out?
5. In what ways does it make a difference for you that Christ's mediating work not only redeems you from sin but guarantees you will receive the promised eternal inheritance?
6. Why is it that there can be no true worship (purified) of the true God in a bloodless religion?
7. What does Romans 3:20-26 teach us regarding how can God retain His righteousness and still forgive the worst of sinners?
8. What would you say is the value of Christ's sacrifice given the scope of our redemption, eternal inheritance, cleansing, and forgiveness? What does that reveal about God's heart for His people?