

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 9:15-28**

To better understand why Jesus had to die in order for us to receive the promises of the new covenant.

Read the Text:

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. 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. 25 Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9:15-28, ESV)

Study the Text:**The Mediator**

Verse 15 continues the argument that verses 1 through 14 established: all of the old covenant practices and implements ultimately pointed to Christ, and since he has arrived, they are becoming obsolete and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). Below is a breakdown of some of the key terms and concepts in this passage.

A WILL & AN INHERITANCE (VS.15-17)

Verse 15 begins with “therefore,” indicating that this is a direct follow-up from what has been previously stated, namely that the blood of Christ, through the eternal Spirit, has purified our consciences from dead works in order to serve God (Heb. 9:14). In light of that, it is clear that he is “the mediator of a new covenant.” And what does this new covenant accomplish? It allows “those who are called” to “receive the promised eternal inheritance,” on the grounds that “a death has occurred” which “redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.”

This is reminiscent of legal language, which is further strengthened by the introduction of the concept of “a will.” This is referring to “a last will and testament,” which is given only after the person who authors the will dies. And that is precisely the argument being made here in verses 16 and 17. The new covenant promises are seen as an inheritance delivered to the recipients via a will, and for this delivery to happen, a death must first occur. Imagine for a moment that you have a set of valuables you hope to pass on to your loved ones after you die. You go to establish a will in which you specify these valuables go to them. They would not receive those valuables until after you die. This is the point Hebrews is making. The eternal inheritance has been promised to us who are called by Christ in a will, but we do not receive them until after he dies.

Jesus’s death was necessary in order for the promises of the new covenant to be delivered to us. And indeed, death has always been a requirement, even in the old covenant, which the author speaks to next.

BLOOD IS ALWAYS REQUIRED (VS.18-22)

Verse 18 states: “Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.” But the blood source was different in the old covenant. Under the covenant of Moses, “the blood of calves and goats” was used along with “water and scarlet wool and hyssop” to sprinkle onto the book of the covenant the people, ratifying the covenant. Verses 21 and 22 continue by adding that not only was the covenant ratified with blood, but that everything in the Tabernacle was also purified by blood, and that atonement was secured with blood as well. Blood has always been an integral part of atonement, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin requires blood.

And the same case is then made that was made in verses 1 through 14. In the same way that all of the old covenant implements were shadows of a future substance in Christ, so too is it true that the sprinkling of blood ultimately pointed to a heavenly reality in Christ. The author even likens these earthly, old covenant practices to “copies” of a greater heavenly reality. Indeed, even the Tabernacle was constructed based on a pattern that Moses saw on Sinai (Ex. 25:40). The sprinkling of blood and the pouring out of water and hyssop all prefigure Christ and his bloody cross, where he would be fed water and hyssop for thirst (Jn. 19:29; Ps. 51:7). These things point us to the greater promises of God in Christ.

THE SUPERIOR SACRIFICE (VS.23-26)

Christ has up to this point been sufficiently presented to us as the high priest who makes atonement for his people, but here in chapter 9, he is also seen as the object of sacrifice. And he makes this self-sacrifice, not in the Tabernacle or the earthly Temple, but in the very presence of God the Father in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:24). And his sacrifice is fully sufficient. Unlike the old covenant sacrifices that had to be repeatedly offered because of their insufficiency, Christ’s sacrifice was good for all time. Hebrews 9:25-26 states: “Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, 26 for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Jesus does not continually save us. He has made the sacrifice, and it has paid the debt of sin once and for all.

A FUTURE HOPE (VS.27-28)

Verses 15 through 26 provide assurance to the reader that Jesus has done all that is necessary to make atonement for our sin. But the first-century reader would surely think: “Why is life still so difficult? Why do we face such persecution for our faith?” After all, though redeemed, we still live in a fallen world. Thus, verses 27 and 28 offer a future hope for those who belong to Jesus Christ: “And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Christ will return once more, not to deal with sin, for that task has already been fully accomplished. Jesus’s return will be to gather those he has redeemed and bring final salvation to us as he judges his enemies, remakes heaven and earth, and establishes his kingdom here where we will dwell with him forever (Rev. 22:3-5).

What About Now?

One takeaway is the grim reality of the depravity of sin. All sin requires blood. Some people have criticized God and Christianity for being too violent, too bloody, too unwholesome. On the contrary, it is sin that is too violent, too bloody, and too unwholesome. Sin is so vile that it took the death of the Son of God to pay the debt. The blood of Jesus Christ ought not only to bring hope and assurance that God loves us, but also to remind us of just how deplorable sin is. A second takeaway is the lasting assurance we have in Christ’s redemption. Jesus Christ saved you from your sins, not just once, but for eternity. It is easy to accept the forgiveness of God for our past sins but be hesitant to accept it for the future sins we have yet to commit. However, eternal redemption covers all of it. Finally, this passage should provide the reader hope for a greater day when God has not only redeemed us from the power of sin, but also from its presence. One day Jesus will return and do away with sin and death forever (Rev. 21:14). That day is not now, but it will come. Take heart in knowing that however bad things may seem, there is rescue.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 9:15. What does Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, give us through his death?

2. Read Hebrews 9:16-17. In your own words, summarize this passage.

Day Two

1. Read Hebrews 9:18-20. How was the first covenant inaugurated? In your own words, summarize the description of this inauguration in verses 19 and 20.

2. Read Hebrews 9:21-22. What was sprinkled with blood by Moses? What did the Law dictate must be purified with blood? Can there be forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood? Why?

Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 9:23-24. What was necessary according to verse 23? Which holy place did Jesus Christ enter into?

2. Read Hebrews 9:25-26. What would it mean if Jesus had to enter the holy places as the previous high priests did? Instead, how many times did Jesus enter to make a sacrifice?

Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 9:27. What is appointed for man? What does this mean?

2. Read Hebrews 9:28. How does the previous verse connect to what Jesus will do?

Discuss the Text!

Session 21 Discussion: Sin's Grim Reality

Hebrews 9:22 is clear: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin." Sin requires blood and death (Rom. 6:23). Talk as a group about the grim reality of sin, and how wrong it is, in light of what sin costs, to normalize or justify it.

1. Icebreaker: What's the most you've paid to fix something (e.g., home repairs, car repairs, etc.)? Why did it cost you so much?
2. What's the most you've paid, practically speaking, for a sin you've committed?
3. Why does knowing the cost of sin make justifying it so deplorable? And yet, how often do you justify your sin?
4. How is sin being normalized today? Why is this so egregious?
5. Hebrews 9:26 says Christ appeared "once for all" to put away sin by his sacrifice. How should that truth change the way you respond to guilt, shame, and the temptation to earn God's forgiveness?
6. Kid Talk: Imagine you broke a neighbor's window but had no money to replace it. Then your dad paid the entire cost for you. Would you need to keep paying for that same window after it had already been paid for? How is that like what Jesus did when he gave his life to pay for our sins once for all?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus is not only the high priest of the new covenant, but also the fully sufficient sacrifice of the new covenant.
2. The penalty of sin reflects the seriousness of it.