



“Covered with (the) Blood”

Hebrews 9

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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1 Then indeed, even the first [covenant] had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. 2 For a tabernacle was

prepared: the first [part], in which [was] the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; 3 and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, 4 which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which [were] the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; 5 and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. 6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 7 But into the second part the high priest [went] alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and [for] the people's sins [committed] in ignorance; 8 the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. 9 It [was] symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience— 10 [concerned] only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 11 But Christ came [as] High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16 For where there [is] a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament [is] in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. 18 Therefore not even the first [covenant] was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, 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 has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. 23 Therefore [it was] necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, [which are] copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

9:1-28

I am starkly reminded here of the payment, the cost, of my salvation. The covenant, the relationship we have with God, came literally at the sacrifice of blood. In our blood is our life. No one lives long without it! None of us would therefore argue the cost was high. Extremely high.

The first verse of chapter 9 speaks of "ordinances of divine service." Rules, guidelines, and directives on how to serve in the temple of God. We see in this passage that the new covenant of God brought a new aspect to such service. These old things have been replaced by something new. Under the old covenant, the high priest could enter into the presence of God, but not anytime he desired. Only once per year. And he could never do so without blood. There had to be sacrifice. Now hold onto that fact concerning the sacrifice he made

because it will play into what we will talk about later. Such sacrifice was never finished. It had to be done again and again. Thus the guilt of sin was never abolished, only covered temporarily. We know too that the high priest had an ongoing problem: he was mortal and thus would sooner or later die, and a new high priest had to be placed up there to do all of this. There seemed to be no end to this cycle of sacrifice, ordinances, guidelines, rituals, and the revolving door of new high priests coming on the scene.

The high priest then had to pass the veil that essentially kept mankind out. The average man could not approach God because of sin. Jesus thankfully put an end to this. Matthew 27:50-51 tells us, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom..." The veil, even the Tabernacle itself, literally and constantly said to all the people, "God is here, but you can't come to Him." It all represented religion. And Jesus put an end to all of it that day on the cross. Now we are called, commanded even, to "draw near" (Hebrews 10:20). Verse 19 before that says we are to "have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus."

Now, all of this is not overly complicated nor is it overly hard for us to grasp. Those of us who have walked with God for even a short period have come to terms with the understanding presented here. It is the roots of our practice and our embrace of the concept of the chapter 2 verse 3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" and in chapter 3 verse 14, "We become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end." Thus salvation is not the end of Christianity, but the only the beginning. The writer went on in that specific passage, reminding us not to "harden our hearts." He gave an example, not of those who would reject such a great salvation, but would reject its ramifications, its consequences. He cited those who came out of Egypt and for whom God was angry with for 40 years. God was not angry in this case because they refused salvation, but because they refused obedience after they were saved! They were refused God's subsequent post-salvation-Hebrews-highlighted "rest" because they refused to obey, refused to live in the light of His salvation.

Hebrews 4 continues with this idea: "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although [or even though] the works were finished from the foundation of the world."

You may feel this morning that all is well in your spiritual world because your "conscience is clear." But a perfect conscience is not a naively innocent conscience, one that is happy in a numb state where thoughts of guilt and sin and shortcoming are ignored through an overriding belief that because I am right in positional standing before God, I am therefore a-ok in all standing before God. Paul lived "in all good conscience" before God when he was hunting down and killing Christians! He was in fact opposing God even when his conscience did not convict him. The fact is, our conscience is not a complete guide to conduct but is subject to instruction. This is why the writer rebuked the reader of this letter, saying, "By this time you ought to be teachers of these things but in fact you are still babies drinking the milk." (Chapter 6) When we reject growing up in God, maturing and taking our place in the body in the place for which we were created, we are in fact standing in disobedience.

The human spirit is controlled by what we believe and the seat of believing is the human heart: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov 23:7). It is in this throne room that we make our decisions, for "out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov 4:23). Our hearts can often seek refuge from our conscience and therefore harden themselves against light and truth. So much so we can "sear" or "brand" our conscience "as with a hot iron." We then can follow a course of sin and rebellion without feeling (Eph 4:19). But a conscience that is possessed by the Holy Spirit does not condemn or damn our soul, but rather speaks into our lives God's direction to warn us away from evil or danger. A perfect conscience now knows God and understands our salvation by His work. We understand good and evil, especially in light of the presence of His spirit consuming and controlling us. And thus our conscience speaks to our heart that all is well. But without that Holy Spirit possessing our consciences and our very lives, we can still stand in grave danger as the Israelites did in the wilderness. They had, in a perfect picture of Christ's salvation, been "saved" out of the world and the bondage of sin. But things still did not end well, did they?

Note "dead" works in verse 14: "...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" What is NOT said here is as important as what IS said. The cross and the infinite sacrifice that was made to positionally place us in God's grace effectually rids us of dead works. PLEASE NOTE: Not all works, not service unto God and kingdom, but the dead works that are an effort to earn our standing with God. The writer makes sure we do not misunderstand by going a step further and telling us that once rid of such false and dead works, we can now serve the living God in truth and with passion. Not to earn salvation, but to reflect the salvation that has forever transformed my heart. And out of that heart come my "issues of life." We cannot deny that scripture overflows with instruction concerning faithful works. But those works are not "dead." They are living works from a living individual that is understanding his or her free salvation and responds in faithful maturation.

Thus we must make sure we do not confuse the aspects of salvation with those of sanctification, calling, and service. To do so is to "sear our conscience" with falsehoods. Beliefs that because Jesus saved me, because He did it all concerning my redemption and positional standing, I no longer need to concern myself with issues of obedience, holiness, maturing, service to God and others, and having a teachable spirit.

For a while there was a popular thing going around where people would wear these little bracelets that said "WWJD", which stood for, "What would Jesus do?" Now, that's all well and fine except for a couple of things: one, we don't really know the answer to that in many situations, and short of a biblical mandate in an area of behavior, we could really only guess. Therefore, two, what we really should be saying is "WDJD", which stands for, "What DID Jesus do?" Because, truth be told, we really don't know what He *would* do in many situations, just guessing really. But we can know what he DID do, and thereby live our lives in at least an attempt to emulate our Redeemer.

The book of Hebrews has a couple of overt themes which are hard to miss. One is the idea that Jesus is superior to Moses, to the law, to the old way of sacrifices, etc. He is superior to all. Thus, there is an overt call to a vertical relationship with God which surpasses all relationships. Then, there is the model of how such a relationship is manifested in the real world. How the horizontal love, commitment and service is an outpouring of that vertical relationship with Christ. We have seen how such a relationship with Christ is more than "personal" in respect of merely an individual, but moreover it is other-centered and body-life lived out. We have seen how it is impossible to live the vertical while ignoring the horizontal. We already spoke of the issue of the new covenant. By His very design, it's only lived out in community, in fellowship with others and the body life. Side by side the greatest commandments appear:

Mark 12:30-31 says, "*And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. 'This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.*"

Throughout the New Testament we are called to seek a life which reflects our desire and our real life seeking to be like Christ, to live our life as Christ lived His. Even our very name says it all! For Christian literally means "little Christ." It was originally used as a term of derision, but now believers wear the name with pride!

1 John 2:6 ESV "*Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*"

How did he walk then? He walked in sacrifice. A love of others as well as love for his father. The two acts were out of the same heart. Lately, I hear a phrase being floated around here: "I don't want to be a people pleaser." I find that humorous and ironic since Jesus spent His whole life here doing just that! It's also a veiled insult to all those who are leaders of men because it is in our very job description to "please men." Not through the flesh, through lies or soft-peddling the truth, but long-term and righteous pleasing.

Now I know what the root idea behind such a statement means: one does not want to *do* something or *be* something with the sole reason that someone else wants us to be or do such. But such an idea invariably becomes an excuse for not doing anything that others desire us to do. It is our seared conscience lying to our heart. Anyone else's views and desires concerning us immediately become suspect, and, wearing this excuse like a badge, we can then bow out of just about everything: every call, every prophetic word, and every godly relationship that we could have. We are "released" from anything we are uncomfortable with or is difficult, short of a literal telegram from God addressed to us personally! Generally, those who want to adhere to a life practice of not pleasing others are, in fact, only then pleasing themselves. Because "not pleasing others" essentially comes to mean "pleasing me"

Titus 3:1-2 "*Remind them to be subject (or submissive) to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.*"

Let me ask you a direct question: Did Jesus live at all to please others? Did He teach us to do the same?

Here in this book we read the graphic picture of the gospel cross. The "nuts and bolts" of what occurred there on the cross that day. Many of us are fond of saying, "I just seek to please God. I don't need to please men." But let us see now how Jesus pleased His Father. He did so by blessing men, bringing them redemption by His act, and ultimately "pleasing men". And the reason that worked is because His desire and priority to please God manifested itself in pleasing other people. Because the fact remains that He could not love God vertically and not love man horizontally. And loving God literally and concretely manifests itself in loving each other. Jesus in the garden, in His human form, was not jumping for joy with the prospect of the cross, the vicious death he was facing. He said, "*If possible, let this cup pass from me.*" But He went on to say, "*But Father, thy will be done...not mine.*" We cannot say we love God if we fail to love men. The Bible is filled with passages of coming under the authority of godly men. Allowing others to speak into our lives, correcting, encouraging, and helping to define God's message to any one of us.

Jesus came to please men by the shedding of His blood. He literally went so far as to give us His life, and then He gave up that life for the same reason. In obedience to God, but with the resounding effect of pleasing mankind. Blood. He gave us His blood. I wonder what we are withholding through this lying excuse of, "I don't want to be a people pleaser"? Now, we are not to try to live out a service that we are not called by God to do. But we should be very sure then what we ARE called to do, and then do it. A calling by God, one that touches our brethren, is not the same thing as what we often refer to as "people pleasing." Let us seek God's call upon our life and live it out. And I assure you that we will not accomplish such without pleasing godly men and women along the way, nor will we find it and live without allowing others to speak into our lives and encouraging us to be more than we are in our natural fleshly selves.

Jesus sacrificed Himself. Filled with the Holy Spirit, He gave of His blood. The fact that He sacrificed Himself for our salvation, leaving nothing for us to add to that salvation, does not render us exempt from spiritual and worldly sacrifice for God and kingdom, for community and brotherhood, in response to that salvation. This is the essence of the message of all of Hebrews. We are called to give, to serve, to live, and to be for others because of what Jesus did for us freely and without cost. We are called to please God, to "worship" the living God through what we do and what we are. And when we please God, there will be no question that the men and women in your life will be also so pleased. In this there is a "rest" that remains for many of us. A rest so many of us have not yet experienced because we are still living for self under the guise of "just living for Jesus."

The work of the cross, the free gift of salvation paid solely by Jesus, is done. What will you now do with it? The rest that awaits us is after the cross and filled with the water of the Spirit. A spirit that propels us on into living and loving Jesus as well as each other.

Note Matthew 25:31-46