

A Completed & Cleansed Conscience

Hebrews 9:9-14

August 11, 2024

INTRO ... "Essential Pillars of Happiness"

... "Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier" ...

...Then there's Hebrews!

Hebrews 9:9-14 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.

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) 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**. 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**.

Heb 10:1-2 ¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, **having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?**

Hebrews Happiness Essentials:

- ✓ Completed & Cleansed Conscience
- ✓ Redemption
- ✓ Blood
- ✓ Forgiveness
- ✓ One-&done

The Climactic Shift in Hebrews ...is that THE CHRIST has come and has Accomplished Something that Nothing Else has been able to accomplish! ...THEN, Hebrews tells us this is RELEVANT and IMPACTING On Our Lives!!

"Conscience" = [Heb 9:9] Συνείδησις – [syneidēsis (Gk.)] (9:14; 10:2, 22; 13:18*), is one of a group of terms available to describe the inward aspect of human nature. (New International Greek Testament Commentary) (a Neighbor to Biblical words like "soul, spirit, heart, inner-man, mind, etc.)

The "TENSION" in This Story/Passage ...is v. 9-10 ...Something was NEEDING to be done to the Conscience that Other Things Could NOT Do!!

"COMPLETING" the Conscience

...How Vitrally Important is THIS (Hebrews Given) Awareness to My Pursuit of Happiness This Week? ...There is an "Inner-Aspect" of Me that NEEDS to Find a Sense of "COMPLETION"!!

v. 9... According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot **perfect the conscience** of the worshiper,

"perfecting" = teleioō (Gk.) - to complete, i.e. (literally) accomplish, or (figuratively) consummate (in character): — consecrate, finish, fulfil ...to make perfect, complete; to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end ...to add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full

- It is a word that is speaking into human restlessness, drivenness, striving, inadequacy
- It is a quality found in our inner noise that says "I'm not smart enough" (tall enough, pretty enough, good enough, wealthy enough, etc.)

"It might be youth. ... It might be your inferiority complex or the boredom of small-town claustrophobia ... It might be loneliness. It might be your inexplicable attraction to "bad boys" or the still unknown thrill of transgression and the hope of feeling something. It might be the self-loathing that has always been so weirdly bound up with a spiritual yearning. It might be the search for a mother, or a father, or yourself. It might be greed or curiosity. It might be liberation or escape. It might be a million other reasons, but we all leave.

It's like all we ever do is leave. ...You can leave without a bus ticket, of course. You can depart in your heart and take an existential journey to anywhere but the "here" that's stifling you. You can be sleeping in the same bed and be a million miles away from your partner. You can still be living in your childhood bedroom and have departed for a distant country. You can play the role of the "good son" with a heart that roams in a twilight beyond good and evil. You can even show up to church every week with a voracious appetite for idols. Not all prodigals need a passport. We leave because we're looking. For something. For someone.

We leave because we long for something else, something more. We leave to look for some piece of us that's missing. Or we hit the road to leave ourselves behind and refashion who we are. We hit the road in the hope of finding what we're looking for—or at least sufficiently distracting ourselves from the hungers and haunting absences that propelled our departure in the first place.

And the road doesn't disappoint: it offers an unending ribbon of sights and stop-offs whose flashing billboards promise exactly what you're looking for—happiness, satisfaction, joy. Indeed, the road has a strange way of showing what looks like a destination in the distance that, when you get there, points to another destination beyond it. So just when you think friendship or wealth or a family or influence was your ultimate destination, you hang out there for a while and the place starts to dim. What once held your fascination—even, for a time, seemed like it was your reason to live—doesn't "do it" for you anymore. You won't admit it to yourself for a long while. After all, you sent out all those celebratory announcements about your new existential home. You effectively told everyone you'd arrived; you believed it yourself. But at some point you'll finally be honest with yourself about the disappointment, and eventually that disappointment becomes disdain, and you can't wait to get away. Fortunately, just as you start to look around, you see the promise of a new destination down the road." ... "We're always on the move, restless, vaguely chasing something rather than oriented to a destination." **James K.A. Smith**, "On the Road with Saint Augustine", p. 3-4, 5

...Hebrews is telling us—Be Prepared to Hear This Sort of Noise Coming from Inside of You!! ...We long for "teleioō" ("to add what is wanting in order to render a thing full")

...THEN, Hebrews is going to tell us what No Human Source Can Conclude—Only the All-Knowing-Creator

v. 9-10 ⁹...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.

...In my "Quest for Increased Happiness" I have to address the sense of "inner-insufficiency" that is present in the human soul!

"CLEANSING" the Conscience

Heb 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.

"purify" = katharizō (Gk.) - to cleanse (literally or figuratively): — (make) clean(-se), purge, purify. ...in a moral sense, to free from defilement of sin and from faults; to purify from wickedness; to free from guilt of sin; to consecrate by cleansing or purifying;

"I hate shame. I know there is a place for it. Utter shamelessness is not what we are after. I have learned much through the shame I've experienced and there are times when I should experience more of it. But I still hate it. I hate how pervasive it is, how it stalks in disguise beneath so many modern problems. Look under anger, fear, even guilt, and you will find a root of shame. I hate to see the suffering. People are dying from it—some quickly, others slowly. It is the heart disease of every era.

What is shame? ...Shame is the deep sense that you are unacceptable because of something you did, something done to you, or something associated with you. You feel exposed and humiliated. ...There isn't one mandatory definition or description for shame, but any definition will include certain elements. For example, you can expect images of being an outsider, naked, and unclean. ...A middle-aged man seemed fine to others, though he himself felt like a little boy, stuck in the past, inadequate, small, and worthless. A decent job couldn't erase the words and actions of his parents. Some of the words were all too common: 'You will never amount to anything.' Those words were bad enough. Now add his parents' indifference to his recounting of his school day, coupled with their enthusiasm whenever his sisters appeared. No wonder he had a lingering sense that something was very wrong with him. That sense is called shame." **Ed Welch**, "Shame Interrupted", p. 3

...What the World has done to "silence the voice of Defilement" is "Outlawed Shame!" ...It has criticized and gone hostile toward any sense of being told "you're wrong" ... "you did something wrong" ... "you failed"

"Sometimes the descriptions of shame in this book will be jolting. For example, 'You ARE an outcast' is blunt, matter-of-fact, and a bit impolite. A nicer way to say this would be, 'You FEEL AS IF you are an outcast'; 'You FEEL AS IF you are worthless, though you really aren't.' Shame doesn't seem as oppressive when you insert enough FEEL-AS-IFS. If you only FEEL shameful, maybe it can be covered over by some affirming self-talk and you'll be good to go: 'Don't pay attention to what you feel because it isn't true. You really are acceptable and worthy. Clean as a whistle. Really! Just ignore the fact that you feel naked, contaminated, and rejected. Think positive.' ...Well, that is not true. Shame is not a mirage. It is very real. ...A person who has lived with rejection can't neutralize it with happy thoughts. Shame is like dirt. No matter how it happened, you are a mess and something has to be done about it. When you are dirty, there is no FEEL-AS-IF about it. Wishful thinking is ineffective. Psychiatric medications, drugs or alcohol, a change in perspective, and self-affirmation are equally ineffective. Shame demands something much more potent than these superficial treatments." **Ed Welch**, "Shame Interrupted", p. 3-4

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"We don't often think about our conscience as a serious problem when it comes to God. The problem is what he thinks about us, not what we think about ourselves. But even after God has accepted us in Christ, our unclean conscience can keep us far from God. Christ's intent as high priest is to bring us to God. Therefore, he not only reconciles God to us, but also cleanses our consciences so that we may enter into his service.

The conscience serves to tell us about ourselves. It communicates to us what we are. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, in his sermon on this text, pointed out three problems revealed by our conscience: a knowledge of past sinful acts; a knowledge of our sinful nature, with its thoughts and desires; and our ongoing contact with evil in this world. All of these conspire, unless cleansed, to keep us from serving the Lord." **Dan Doriani**, "Hebrews", Reformed Expository Commentary

...“Defilement, Shame, the Contaminated Conscience can come from any of Spurgeon’s 3 categories...

...Insights from Hebrews!

(1) There is the “Fading-Remnant-Echo” of “Incompletion & Insufficiency” bouncing around inside of you!

...Your mind (psychology, inner being) is “being renewed” (bent, reshaped, reprogrammed)—But It can Still Tap Into Your Fallen-Self!

...Where are You Shopping for Your Sense of “COMPLETION”? ...What are you looking to that you hope will make your feel “Whole” ...What are you trying to “Accomplish” that you hope will make you feel validated, finished, and fulfilled?

(2) There Will be “Encounters with Defilement” in your life. ...You will experience moments where you feel “dirty” ... “unworthy” ... “unwanted” ... “unaccepted”

...How will you answer those strong feelings and their accusing tone? ...Will you get angry and reject the character of God? (I will never serve a God who has any kind of standard of right & wrong!) ...Will you work really hard to be “good” or “clean” in some other areas of your life to offset your since of uncleanness?

GOOD NEWS of Hebrews!!! ...There is ONE Mediator ...who did something that no one/nothing else could ever do!! ...HE can make you COMPLETE ...HE can CLEANSE YOU!!