

Sam Storms
Bridgeway Church
Hebrews #24

Our Eternal Inheritance in Christ
Hebrews 9:15-26

So Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again (Exodus 11:4-6)

That, dear friends, was a “cry” I thank God never reached my ears. I cannot conceive of any more dreadful and horrifying experience than to have been present that night as the angel of death sped with noiseless wing through the streets of the many cities of Egypt. The judgment of God was about to fall on this unbelieving nation. It must have been an especially bitter cry that echoed from Pharaoh’s chamber as his first born fell to the earth, dead. And as if to accentuate the pervasiveness of the wrath of God against those who rejected him, even the first born of the cattle were smitten.

And yet there were some houses into which the angel of death had no access. Why? What was it that preserved one house from the destruction that another endured? Was it the elegance of the building? Was death averted because one house was made of marble and another of mud and straw? No. The modest huts of Israelite slaves were spared while Pharaoh’s majestic palace was the first to the smell the odor of death, notwithstanding its external beauty and high material value. Perhaps it was the “goodness” of the people within. Perhaps it was the moral merit of each individual, after long lives of diligence in good works, that repelled the angel of death from the doorstep of those who survived. Again, no. The answer is given to us in Exodus 12:7, 12-13.

“Then they shall take some of the blood [of the sacrificial lamb] and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. . . . For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. ***And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you***, when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exodus 12:7, 12-13).

There is no greater or more eternally important theme in all of Scripture than that of the shed blood of the sacrificial substitute. For example, when Paul writes in Romans 3:25 that God set forth the Lord Jesus Christ to be a propitiation **“by (or through) his blood”** his point is that what quenched the wrath of God and averted the death-stroke of divine judgment was not primarily Jesus’ life, perfect and sinless though it be, nor his teaching, wise and instructive as it is, but rather the shedding of his blood on the cross of Calvary.

Here is how Charles Spurgeon expressed this truth:

“Oh, how precious is this blood-red shield! My soul, cower thou down under it when the darts of hell are flying; this is the chariot, the covering whereof is purple; let the storm come, and the deluge rise, let even the fiery hail descend, beneath that crimson pavilion my soul must rest secure, for what can touch me, when I am covered with His precious blood?” (38).

There are a lot of things in the Christian faith, as set forth in Scripture, that offend the politically correct mindset of our society. The so-called “scandal of particularity,” according to which salvation is available only through faith in Jesus Christ and cannot be found in other non-Christian religions, is especially offensive. The sexual ethic set forth in Scripture where adultery and homosexuality and pre-marital intercourse are forbidden is mocked and ridiculed. The doctrine of hell is simply assumed to be barbaric and cruel and is dismissed out of hand.

The same can also be said of the concept of substitutionary atonement in which an innocent person dies and sheds his blood in the place of guilty men and women and in doing so endures their penalty and obtains for them the forgiveness of sins. ***What many find especially offensive in this truth is the pervasive presence in the Bible of blood.***

I remember a conversation with a young man who was adamantly opposed to everything Christian. Among his reasons, at the top of the list were the declarations here in Hebrews 9 concerning the blood of Christ. According to **Hebrews 9:12** it was “by means of his own blood” that Jesus secured for us “eternal redemption.” Again, in **Hebrews 9:14** it is the “blood of Christ” offered to God that purifies “our conscience from death works to serve the living God.” If that were not enough, here in **Hebrews 9:22** we are told again that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

It all struck him as ugly and barbaric and contrary to the portrait of God as loving and longsuffering. He simply couldn’t reconcile this emphasis on the shedding of blood with his understanding of the nature of God. I tried to point out to him that where many go astray is in thinking that the “blood” shed by Christ on Calvary’s cross was primarily an expression of divine

wrath and judgment when in point of fact it is ***also and equally a display of his kindness and grace and mercy to hell-deserving sinners***. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the words of the apostle Paul to the elders in the church at Ephesus. He says this to them in Acts 20:28,

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Note closely two things.

First, the shedding of “blood” was the means by which God “obtained” us or redeemed us or purchased us as his own possession. In other words, ***the pouring out of “blood” was the way in which God’s eternal love for his people was expressed***. Paul is telling the elders in Ephesus that *they* should love the church and care for her precisely because *God* does. And God’s love was manifest most vividly and concretely in the shedding of blood.

He says much the same thing in Ephesians 5:25 – “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” When he says that Christ “gave himself up” for the Church it means that he yielded up his life and poured out his blood in death to redeem her. ***The blood of Christ is both the requirement of God’s justice and the expression of God’s love***. Neither one of those should be allowed to cancel out the other.

Second, and even more important, is that this translation in Acts 20:28 is inaccurate. God does not have “blood.” God is spirit. A more accurate rendering of this passage is that God the Father obtained or redeemed the church with ***the blood of “his own,” the latter being a reference to the Son, Jesus Christ***. The words “his own” are actually terms of endearment, an expression designed to highlight the intimacy that exists between the Father and Son. It wasn’t an angel that God sent to die or one of the four living creatures from the book of Revelation. It was none else but his own dear, cherished, highly loved, and precious Son.

It’s not unlike when Ann and I speak of our own children and say, “Melanie is my own dear daughter,” or “Joanna is my precious child.”

Let me say one more thing about the pervasive presence of “blood sacrifice” in Scripture and why it is so important. My suspicion is that the primary reason why some hesitate and even reject the biblical emphasis on the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins is because ***they have a very low view of God and a very high view of themselves***. What I mean by that is they don’t think much of God’s holiness nor of man’s sin. God’s holiness isn’t a big deal

to them and neither is their own sin. Thus when man is held in high regard and God is held in low regard, there doesn't seem to be any need for a violent substitutionary sacrifice in blood, such as we see portrayed in the NT with regard to the death of Jesus.

Human sin and rebellion will never be seen for what it is or register fully in our hearts until set over against the transcendent holiness of the God against whom it is perpetrated. Once you see and sense the beauty of God's infinite righteousness, glory, and majesty you will readily understand the ugliness of human transgression and unbelief and idolatry. And only when both of these truths are embraced and understood will you see how reasonable and necessary is the shedding of blood to obtain the forgiveness of sins.

So, what I'm suggesting, as difficult as this may be for some of you to swallow, is that all this talk of "blood" in Hebrews 9 is probably ugly and offensive because ***you don't fully understand the nature of God or the nature of man. Nothing makes more sense than the necessity of blood sacrifice to those who have been gripped with the incalculable heights of divine goodness and the immeasurable depths of human badness.***

Such being the case, let's back up for a moment and briefly summarize what all this talk about "blood" and "purification" is saying.

The Necessity of Blood Sacrifice in both Old and New Covenants

Beginning with v. 18 and extending down through v. 23, our author explains that during the time of the first or old covenant that God established with Moses and Israel, everything had to be cleansed with blood. The book of the law was sprinkled with blood, the people themselves were sprinkled with blood, the tabernacle and all the furniture and its many accessories were sprinkled with blood ***as a way of teaching them and us that you cannot approach God and worship God and enter a relationship with God until such time as the penalty for human sin has been paid and the justice of God has been satisfied.***

Notice how he sums this up in v. 22 – "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood," and the reason for that is because "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

He says "*almost everything*" because there were a couple of exceptions. Perhaps the most obvious was the concession made for a poor Israelite who simply didn't have enough money to purchase a lamb or goat. He was allowed to bring a portion of flour or wheat as his sin offering in place of an animal or blood sacrifice.

He then says in v. 23 that the earthly tabernacle and its furnishings, which were but copies of the heavenly reality, had to be purified in this way. That is why the Levitical high priest of Israel had to enter into the Holy of Holies once each year, year after year after year, with “the blood of calves and goats” (v. 19) to make atonement for the sins of the people. ***But, as vv. 24-26 make clear, Jesus is an infinitely superior high priest because he doesn’t enter into an earthly tabernacle with the blood of a sacrificial lamb but instead enters into the heavenly tabernacle, into God’s very presence, once for all time, to offer up his own precious blood.*** There was a need to offer such a sacrifice only “once” because it was altogether perfect and sufficient to deal with sin.

And here is what this glorious offering of the blood sacrifice of Jesus himself has accomplished: by means of it ***he “put away sin”*** (9:26). Now, what does that mean?

I think there are at least three things involved here. **First**, it means that by enduring the penalty for sin that each of us deserved he has forever satisfied the justice and wrath of God against us. Sin therefore no longer poses a barrier to our relationship with God. That’s not because we don’t continue to fail and to commit sins throughout the course of life. Of course we do. But the *guilt* those sins incurred and the *penalty* those sins demanded have been forever absorbed in Jesus and thus forever and finally “put away.”

Second, he has “put away” sin in the sense that his death and resurrection have supplied us with the power by which we can win the daily experiential battle with sin’s power. Yes, I know you sin. So do I. But there is now available to us through the Holy Spirit the indwelling power to say No to sin. That’s the glory of what Christ achieved. ***He not only endured the penalty of sin, he also broke its power.*** Now that the Holy Spirit indwells and empowers each believer we have the strength and energy to resist its allure and to say No to its appeal.

Third, by the sacrifice of his own precious blood on the cross he “put away” sin by laying the foundation for its total eradication when he returns to this earth. That is what we will look at next week where he says in v. 28 that when Christ’s returns to this earth at the Second Coming it won’t be “to deal with sin.” He’s already done that. His return will mean the banishment of sin from our experience altogether. But more on that next week.

Our Eternal Inheritance

Now we are prepared to look closely at what I really want you to see. Read again with me vv. 15-17.

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.

Let me explain what I think he is saying to us.

Securely locked away in a safe-deposit box at one of the banks here in Oklahoma City is ***the last will and testament of Sam and Ann Storms***. It was carefully written up by a competent lawyer and bears all the marks of a fully legal and binding document. It describes in typical lawyer's language what is to be done with our meager possessions once we are dead. As you would expect, our two daughters are the legal heirs to whatever may remain in our estate when we are gone. But this document draws no special attention as long as Ann and I are alive. It is of no benefit to our children so long as breath remains in our lungs. Until such time as we die, it is only ink on paper.

But when our time to depart this life has arrived, that document instantly comes into play. It speaks definitively to the disposition of all our earthly possessions. The right of ownership to our estate passes to our heirs. There is no such thing as an "inheritance" in any meaningful sense of that term until we die. Then, and only then, may our children lay rightful claim to what then will be legally theirs.

All of us are familiar with this scenario. What I've just described is or at least ought to be true in your case as well. In other words, if you don't have a will, get one! But the important thing for you to understand today is that ***if you are a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you are an heir of all God owns! You stand to inherit the universe!***

There are a couple of important things to remember about this will. First, there isn't anything our daughters can do to dictate who gets what. That is a decision entirely up to the one who makes the will. Jesus Christ has written up his will and he alone determines who gets what. Second, the will doesn't count for much until the person who made it dies. As I said, our daughters don't inherit anything until Ann and I die. Likewise, the heirs of Jesus Christ don't inherit anything until Jesus dies.

We know of course that God can't die. That is why he became a human being in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. ***God's desire was to bequeath all he owns to his spiritual children*** (that's *you* if your faith is in Jesus). And the only way this could happen was if he died, as he did in the death of his Son through the human nature that he took to himself in the incarnation. The death that had to occur for the heirs to come into their possession has occurred. No other death is needed. That is why we read biblical texts like these:

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and ***if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ***, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:16-17).

“So let no one boast in men. ***For all things are yours***, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's” (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were ***sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it***, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:11-14).

Some of you may also be wondering: Who is the “*executor*” of God's last will and testament? After all, the person who dies never executes his own will. Well, in this case he does! Jesus rose from the dead and was exalted to the Father's right hand in heaven. He is there to “execute” the will to make absolutely certain that the children of God receive everything that was bequeathed to them.

Conclusion

“But Sam, I still feel so dirty. I feel so disqualified. How do I know that God won't look at me one more time and find me so sinful, so guilty, so offensive and unworthy that he will write me out of his will? After all, parents exclude their biological children from their will all the time. ***How do I know that God won't disinherit me?***”

You know and can be assured precisely because of what we've seen repeatedly in Hebrews 9. Jesus Christ has once and for all offered himself as a sacrifice on your behalf and in your place. He suffered the penalty that all your sins deserved: be they past, present, or future. His blood has

washed your guilt away. His blood has cleansed and purified your conscience. His blood has done for you what the blood of bulls and goats during the Old Testament could never do. By his blood he has ‘put away’ (v. 26) your sin. Your sin!”

Here is how Charles Spurgeon put it:

“Beloved, it is a thought which ought to make our hearts leap within us, that through Jesus’ blood there is not a spot left upon any believer, not a wrinkle nor any such thing. Oh precious blood, removing the hell-stains of abundant iniquity, and permitting me to stand accepted in the beloved, notwithstanding all the many ways in which I have rebelled against my God” (“The Precious Blood of Christ,” 37).