

HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part thirty-three

Sunday, November 12th, 2017 - 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2005

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WHY NEITHER THE LAW NOR THE SACRIFICES COULD LEAD US INTO FATHER GOD'S PROMISED REST

Hebrews 9:15-22 - "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."

Our writer is explaining how new covenant people "...receive the promised eternal inheritance..." (15). With that phrase our writer is really expanding of a theme already introduced in slightly different wording in two previous texts:

Hebrews 4:1, 9 - "Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it....So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God..."

Hebrews 13:14 - "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

What our writer called the "promise of entering his rest" (4:1), and, "...the city that is yet to come," (13:14), he now explains in more depth as "the promised eternal inheritance" (9:15). This text is about a *process*. It's all about the details of how we receive that eternal inheritance - how we enter that promised rest - and how we enter that city that is yet to come. And, perhaps even more importantly, this text is about how we know we will receive that inheritance and find that rest and enter that city.

Our writer's goal in today's text is to make clear to these Jewish believers - these believers under so much pressure to come again under the emptiness and bondage of the first covenant of the law - he wants to make clear to them exactly why they will never find God's "promised rest" or the "city to come," or the "promised inheritance" under that covenant.

Again, this is more than just ancient history for us. You have neighbors who believe in God - who think through some religious practice, or some form of meditation, or just through their best efforts of humanitarian compassion or tolerance of differing ideologies - people who think God will accept their best efforts while they live and will embrace their souls after they die.

Most people maintain some form of this delusion as the operating system of their lives. And there are dozens of false Christian leaders making small fortunes propagating the kind of teaching people want to hear.

This is the point of those **two** testaments you carry in your Bible. This is the wisdom and mercy of God's patient revelation of His Son's redeeming work. The Christ is sent into a **pre-existing religious system**. His coming is promised right back in the covenant with Abraham. Everything God reveals is packaged in a **two covenant system - a system designed to reveal the necessity of redemption from the outside for people already engaged in their own religious devotion**.

In other words, it was always God's plan to unpack His promised **new covenant** in the context of a **failing old covenant**. This progressive revelation more clearly **reveals the need for a different approach to God**. We are shown what **doesn't work first** so we will be able to **embrace what will work second**. Revelation is tailored to show your neighbor he or she is wrong about approaching God while rejecting Jesus.

And what you're beholding there is the mercy of Father God's old and new covenant revelation.

1) WHAT THE FIRST COVENANT PROMISED AND WHY IT DIDN'T WORK

Hebrews 9:15 - "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."

In just a verse or two our writer will reveal how God communicated the *terms* of the first covenant. Our text says God did this through *Moses* and the terms were the *commandments given on mount Sinai* - Hebrews 9:18-19 - "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...."

We'll look at these verses in a minute. My only point here is our writer is careful to define when the *first covenant of law* was initiated. The terms were in the commandments. And they were given on Mount Sinai. And Moses was the mediator.

Of particular interest here is the nature of this covenant. What did the people gain in *keeping* the covenant? And what did they *lose* in breaking it? We need to look at this because it's the *contrast* between the old and new covenants *on these two points* that fills our text with relevance and gospel light.

In *keeping the covenant* the people gained God's blessing of the *promised land*. Canaan was the blessing God offered His old covenant people:

Exodus 6:1-4 - "But the LORD said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.' [2] God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD. [3] I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. [4] I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.'"

So here's what we know so far. God established a covenant with His people through the law on mount Sinai. Moses was the mediator of that covenant. If the people *kept* the terms of that covenant God would give them the land of Canaan, a land, as we've all heard, "*flowing with milk and honey.*"

Well, the people *didn't* keep the covenant. So the promise of blessing never materialized in any permanent form. Which leads to the next important question. What was the punishment for *breaking* the first covenant? We don't have to guess: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 - "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. [16] If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. [17] But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, [18] I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. [19] I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, [20] loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Break the covenant and they don't get the land. But that's not all. They don't get *life*. They *perish*. Instead of "*life and good*" they get "*death and evil*" (30:15).

Take note of that word, "*death.*" This is not God taking a hissy-fit of anger. This is what sin *brings*. You are witnessing the first hints of the New Testament doctrine of sin. God was already revealing that the "*wages of sin*" were always *death* - Romans 6:23a - "For the wages of sin is death...."

And so here we are. Our text has unpacked a *covenant of law*, an *earthly reward for a covenant kept*, and a *hopelessly depraved bunch of covenant breakers staring death in the face*. Such is the fate of our best religious and moral efforts apart from God's rescue mission in Christ Jesus.

2) SOMETHING WAS NEEDED TO REDEEM SINNERS FOR THE SINS COMMITTED UNDER THE FIRST COVENANT

Hebrews 9:15 - "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."

It was once a given among evangelicals that the death of the Christ was directly related to an actual **redemption from the legal guilt of sins committed**. Sadly that is no longer the case and that means we need to trace the truth very carefully from this text.

“Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant....” (15). We need to establish beyond doubt who this **“he”** is by backing up the sentences into **verse 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 - Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant....”***

So the **“he”** is Jesus, the Messiah, God the Son. Then comes the **reason** - the very clearly stated and central reason - our Lord’s sinless life, willing death, and subsequent priestly ministry are all **savingly essential** - **Hebrews 9:15** - ***“...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.”***

Now we get to the core of Christian truth. Take this truth away and you don’t get a **different** or **progressive** Christianity. You get a **different religion entirely**. Take this truth away and you **abandon Christ and the gospel**.

And here’s the core truth. When our writer says Christ died and in His death ***“...redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant”*** (15) - when he says this he means apart from recognizing and glorying in Christ’s redemptive sacrifice ***all sins stand as a separation from God - even when those sins exist in people devoutly committed to other religious systems.***

3) **THE SAVING BENEFIT OF CHRIST CAN NEVER BE OBTAINED THROUGH THE MORAL TEACHING OF CHRIST**

Hebrews 9:16-17 - ***“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.”***

Have you ever tried to use Google maps without having your location settings turned on? It will still work in terms of a general map, but if you’re in an unknown area and want to know how to find a certain destination it’s much easier when your device shows you the route to your destination **starting with where you are now**.

This is also the best way to understand the meaning of Bible texts. Where we are right now is we’ve just seen the old covenant demanded the sacrificial offering of animals for the people’s sins. What wasn’t explained as fully is **why** those animals had to die.

And the reason they had to die was the people hadn’t kept the first covenant. All of these people - just like you and I - failed to keep the terms of God’s covenant of law. And that’s a huge problem because the first covenant penalty for transgression was **death**:

Deuteronomy 30:19 - ***“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live....”***

The price of transgression had to be paid under the first covenant. And God ordained the sacrificial death of all those animals **in lieu of the sinners themselves**.

But the problem wasn’t really solved. Our writer tells us all those sins committed weren’t actually **removed** by those sacrifices. That’s why Jesus came and died. Now we have as clearly set forth as ever it was the **reason** for the death of Jesus, the world’s Messiah. He died to redeem sinners ***“from the transgressions committed under the first covenant”*** (15).

And the beef of our second point is it wasn’t the **moral teaching** of Christ that accomplished this redemption. It was the **death** of Christ that accomplished it. That’s the reason our writer very quickly switches images to a **will** in the next **seven verses of our text**:

Hebrews 9:16-22 - ***“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."

The point, of course, is the redeeming work of our Lord did not and could not reach us in His *life*. As glorious as His life was it was not His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount or His miracles or His loving words that brought about our redemption.

No. Our redemption came about the way *all* benefits from a will come about. It was through His *death* that we received life. To know and study Jesus without knowing this is like knowing everything about Billy Graham except that he was an evangelist. This is the *key* thing the entire Bible reveals about how the triune God bestows forgiveness and eternal life.

And the final thing our text emphasizes is this central theme in love's redeeming work was already being pictured in all of the sacrifices from the very opening moments of the inaugural first covenant on Mount Sinai:

***Hebrews 9:19-22* - "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."**

Remember, Jesus *so identified with transgressors - transgressors under penalty of death - that, even though entirely sinless, He dies a representative death for us*. As the Apostle Paul so potently put it, Jesus died, *"the just for the unjust."*

Remove this emphasis and you're not talking about Christianity anymore. The life and teaching and example of Jesus on earth will only leave you with an unsealed, unapplied will. There is no *"eternal inheritance"* (15).

O, there's one more thing about the eternal will - the inheritance we have through the Christ. When I die my descendants will have to split up what I have. Each will get only a portion. Through Christ's death each of the several billion trusting in His redeeming work receives the *entire inheritance*. All of the benefits of forgiveness - the removing of sins, the abiding spirit of adoption, and the joy of eternal entrance into His presence - all of those remain *undivided, undiluted, and undiminished for each child of God through Christ Jesus*.