

The Perfect Offering
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Hebrews 9:11-15

Opening Discussion: An old saying: “*Let your conscience be your guide.*” **What is our conscience? How could blindly trusting your conscience be a problem?**

Here’s the big idea of this lesson: We learned in chapter eight when someone accepts Jesus’ free gift of salvation, the change isn’t external...it is from the inside out. To make that change...to purify our consciences we needed a perfect sacrifice.

Let’s begin by reading our passage in chapter nine. To refresh our memories about our study two weeks ago, I’ll start where we left off with verse 13 of chapter eight. I’m reading from the New Living Translation.

Hebrews 8:13 (NLT)

13 When God speaks of a “new” covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

Hebrews 9:11–15 (NLT)

11 So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come.* He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. 12 With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

13 Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. 14 Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds* so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

- This passage of scripture focuses on concepts and ideas that are strange and foreign to people today. When we throw around terms like: *Tabernacle; most holy place; the blood of goats and calves, the ashes of a young cow, purifying from ceremonial impurity*; our friends may think Christianity is strange or even creepy.
- Now, this was not a problem for the original readers of Hebrews.
- The writer of Hebrews actually had a more receptive audience to these concepts than we do. **Why would this talk of sacrifice and blood have resonated with the first century Hebrew readers of this sermon/letter?**
- In a minute we’ll come back to this challenge of people being offended by all this talk of sacrifices and blood. First let’s study this passage.

- In Bible study we ask, “*What does it say; what does it mean; and how does it impact my life?*” Let’s do step one with some observation of what these verses say.
- In the first ten verses of chapter nine the writer described the old covenant sacrificial system.
- Look at verse 11. **What comparison does the writer make in verse 11? What is Jesus’ role? Where does He play that role?**
- Verse 12 contains a lot of doctrine. **If you were underlining words in verse 12, which ones would you underline? What does verse 12 say Jesus did? How was it better?**
- **Why does Christ’s sacrifice have an everlasting result?**
- Jump down to verse 22. It’s an important verse about a fundamental truth: Hebrews 9:22 (ESV)
22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

“How can the blood of animals ever solve the problem of humans’ sins? Jesus Christ became a Man that He might be able to die for people’s sins...An animal’s blood was carried by the high priest into the holy of holies, but Jesus Christ presented Himself in the presence of God as the final and complete sacrifice for sins...no animal sacrifices ever purchased “eternal redemption.” Their blood could only “cover” sin until the time when Christ’s blood would “take away sin” (John 1:29). We have “eternal redemption.” It is not conditioned on our merit or good works; it is secured once and for all by the finished work of Jesus Christ.”

- Verses 13 and 14: The writer of Hebrews used a technique of argument called a “lesser to greater” argument. *“If this lesser thing has worked in the past, how much MORE effective is this greater thing?”* Let’s read verses 13 and 14 again.
- **In verse 13, what were the limitations of the old system of animal sacrifices?**
- **Verse 14: How is Jesus’ death/sacrifice greater than the old system?**
- Here’s a great way to look at the difference between the old and new covenant:

William Barclay writes:

The sacrifice of Christ enabled a man to leave the deeds of death and to become the servant of the living God. That is to say, he did not only win forgiveness for a man's past sin, he enabled him in the future to live a godly life. The sacrifice of Jesus was not only the paying of a debt; it was the giving of a victory. What Jesus did puts a man right with God and what he does enables a man to stay right with God. The act of the Cross brings to men the love of God in a way that takes their terror of him away; the presence of the living Christ brings to them the power of God so that they can win a daily victory over sin.

- Here’s an interesting question: If Jesus’ blood was the only way to purchase “eternal redemption,” **what about all those Jews who trusted God under the old sacrificial system?** Dave Guzik states it well: *“Every sin offering made in faith under the Law was an IOU cashed in at the cross.”*

- **What do you think “purify our conscience” means? What are “dead works?”**
- **End of verse 14, what are our consciences purified for?**

John MacArthur writes about the conscience:

“The conscience is a divinely given warning device that reacts to sin and produces accusation and guilt that cannot be relieved apart from the work of Christ. At the time of salvation it is quieted from its convicting ravings, but it is not deactivated. Rather, it continues its work, warning the believer about sin. Believers should seek a clear conscience.”

Ray Stedman writes:

“The problem that is faced in this passage, therefore, is how to handle a nagging conscience... We each have a conscience... Conscience has been defined as “that still, small voice that makes you feel smaller still,” or, as one little boy put it, “It is that which feels bad when everything else feels good.” Conscience is that internal voice that sits in judgment over our will. There is a very common myth abroad that says that conscience is the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong. But conscience is never that. It is training that tells us what is right or wrong. But when we know what is right or wrong, it is our conscience that insists that we do what we think is right and avoid what we think is wrong. That distinction is very important and needs to be made clear.”

An untrained, un-purified conscience can lead you to do wrong and think you’re doing right!

- **So, how do we TRAIN our purified conscience? Any ideas?**
- John MacArthur suggests several steps to keeping a CLEAN CONSCIENCE:
 - Confess and forsake known sin
 - Ask forgiveness and be reconciled to anyone you’ve wronged
 - Make restitution to anyone you’ve wronged
 - Don’t procrastinate in clearing your wounded conscience
 - Educate your conscience [with the truth of God’s word.]
 - A great article: <http://www.gty.org/resources/Articles/A195/Keeping-a-Pure-Conscience>

As verse 14 says: Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds* so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

One last thing. What about how strange all this talk of sacrifices and blood seems to my friends who I’m trying to reach with the Gospel? Let me share the example of a true skeptic...

Let me share the story of how Fox News' Kirsten Powers became a reluctant follower of Jesus:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/november/fox-news-highly-reluctant-jesus-follower-kirsten-powers.html>

Kirsten Powers describes a pivotal moment at a Bible study:

"I remember walking into the Bible study. I had a knot in my stomach. In my mind, only weirdoes and zealots went to Bible studies. I don't remember what was said that day. All I know is that when I left, everything had changed. I'll never forget standing outside that apartment on the Upper East Side and saying to myself, "It's true. It's completely true." The world looked entirely different, like a veil had been lifted off it. I had not an iota of doubt. I was filled with indescribable joy."

Like a *"veil had been lifted."* Our friends and family may think all this talk of blood and sacrifice is weird...that WE'RE weird! But if we just keep lovingly pointing them to Jesus, it's the Holy Spirit's job to "lift the veil." And when the veil is lifted, everything changes.

When the veil is lifted from our eyes we recognize the awful condition of our hearts and we are confronted with the question: "What can wash away my sins?" The answer is in these verses: **NOTHING**, but the blood of Jesus! It's the only thing that works. It's the only thing that brings relief. He is the only **PERFECT SACRIFICE!**

Hebrews 9:15 (ESV)

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.

So, What's the Takeaway?

How about a closing prayer? Why not re-write these verses into a prayer to the Father?

Pray along with me:

- Father, thank you for sending Christ to become my High Priest seated in Heaven.
- Thank you that he voluntarily shed his own blood to secure my redemption forever.
- Remind me every day that Christ offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for my sins.
- Thank you that the blood of Christ has purified my conscience from sinful deeds, and worthless attempts to earn my salvation, so that I can worship and serve you.
- Help me to saturate my heart, mind, and conscience in Your truth to guide me daily.
- Help me to continually and lovingly point others to Jesus, knowing it's your Spirit's role to lift the veil to reveal how Jesus' perfect sacrifice makes total sense and an eternal difference.