

Hebrews 9:1-14

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[0:00] Our text for this morning is Hebrews chapter 9 verses 1 through 14. Before I lead us in reading it, I want to remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. Hebrews chapter 9 verse 1 and following. Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness.

For a tent was prepared, the first section in which were the lampstands and the table and the bread of presence. It is called the holy place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the most holy place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna and Aaron's staff that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties.

But into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

[1:23] By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing, which is symbolic for the present age.

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

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, He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and of calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

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, 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.

This morning's text is all about the penal substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. This doctrine, though rarely mentioned in these terms, is considered weekly in our gatherings, and I hope that it's treasured and pondered by each of you daily.

[2:56] It is the very core of the Christian faith. We have no justification, no redemption, no adoption, no sanctification, no future glorification without the penal substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ.

Penal substitutionary atonement is the doctrine that states that when Jesus died on the cross, He took the wrath of God, the penalty, penal of God, due our sin, was ours to bear because of our sin, thus the substitutionary, He died in our place, and in so doing, He appeased the wrath of God for our sin.

The atonement. Penal substitutionary atonement. This is central truth. Everything else Christians believe falls apart without it.

And you remember, if you've been with us, that this little church, this little Hebrew church, had been suffering for a belief in this Christ.

They had been tempted to go back to Judaism. Back to the Aaronic priesthood and all that it included. All of its rites and rituals.

[4:26] They were tempted to think, isn't that an acceptable worship of God? Isn't it sufficient for us? And the author of Hebrews is altogether and in many ways saying, no, absolutely not.

And here he brings it kind of to a head, as he says. This central theme. As he states this reality that Christ died in our stead.

I suppose this is why Paul states in 1 Corinthians 2, the first two verses. He says, And when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now, at a first reading of 1 Corinthians 2, verses 1 and 2, you'd think, Paul, you didn't teach them anything else? Doesn't the resurrection have great bearing on their faith? Absolutely, it does. I believe what Paul is trying to say is that I came and I taught you the central doctrine and the things that flow out of it.

[5:49] But simply, the central doctrine. Penal substitutionary atonement. Christ died in our place.

Charles Spurgeon once said, and this quotation is on your bulletin, I believe that if I should preach to you the atonement of our Lord Jesus and nothing else, twice every Sabbath day, my ministry would not be unprofitable.

And he went on to say, perhaps it might be more profitable than it is. Central doctrine. The death of Christ on our behalf.

And so I want to consider that a bit this morning as we look at these first 14 verses. But to get there, to consider the adequacy of what Christ accomplished on the cross, we need to first consider the inadequacy of the Old Covenant.

We've talked about this a bit over the past weeks. Keep in mind that this was a letter written and it would have been read all together, all at one time. And we've broken it up into very small, digestible pieces.

[7:04] I hope that the theme of the inadequacy of the Old Covenant is not growing tired to you because it's helping us to understand in greater measure, greater clarity, the adequacy of the New Covenant.

And so that's our simple outline this morning for the text. Number one, the inadequacy of the Old Covenant. And number two, the adequacy of the New Covenant. But before we get into these two points, I think we need to talk a little bit about the tabernacle and tabernacle worship.

The last part of verse 5, the author of Hebrews says, of these things, we cannot now speak in detail. Why not?

He had somewhere he was going with this letter. He's bringing them along to a point and they already knew the details.

These are Hellenistic Jews, Greek-speaking Jews. They have been part of this practice, this type of worship. They were most likely much more familiar with their Old Testament, their Scripture of the day, than we are today.

[8:23] And so I think, and we don't have a lot more time, but I think this morning it would be good for us to take a few moments to consider the tabernacle and tabernacle worship.

In order to do so, Kent Hughes, who wrote a wonderful commentary on the book of Hebrews, I've been using it much, wrote some really nice, succinct summaries to this end.

And I'm just going to read those to you. I think his words will serve you better this morning than mine. So I want to read just a bit to you about first the tabernacle.

He writes, Israel's tabernacle was a portable tent shrine that was always situated at the geographical heart of Israel, with all the tribes camped around it in designated orderly formation. Approaching the tabernacle, one first would see the white linen walls of the court of the tabernacle, which formed an enclosure 150 feet long and 75 feet wide.

[9:26] The uniform whiteness of the enclosure's walls broadcast the holiness of its function. When a worshiper entered the courtyard, he was immediately in front of the altar of burnt offering, a large bronze altar with a horn at each of its four corners to which offerings could be tied.

This was as far as the layman could come. And it is the place where he laid his hands on the head of the sin offering. Behind the altar and a little to the right stood the bronze laver, which is like a big wash basin with spouts that water would come out of.

A wash basin for the exclusive use of the priests, which, if neglected, imperiled their lives. They had to be purified upon coming in. Directly behind the laver was the tabernacle, a flat-roofed oblong tent 15 feet in height and width and 45 feet long.

It was covered with three layers. The first consisted of gorgeous woven tapestries of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns and linen, which was then overlaid with two layers of animal skins.

Inside, the tabernacle was divided into two rooms by an ornate veil woven of the same colors along with gold and embroidered with cherubim. The veil was supported by four golden columns set on silver bases.

[10:52] The first outer room was called the holy place, and the second inner compartment, the most holy place, or holy of holies.

And the author of Hebrews gives some very brief explanation of these two rooms, beginning in verse 1. Now, even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. He goes on to explain, For a tent was prepared, the first section in which were the lampstands and the table and the bread of the presence is called the holy place.

I just mentioned in Kent Hughes' commentary, right? And there's some things in there, and we won't get into the significance of each of those things and what they represented this morning, but very careful instruction was given.

All of it aimed at the people understanding the great carefulness by which they were to approach God. The weightiness of their sinfulness and the way that it separated them from God.

[12:00] Verse 3, Behind the second curtain was a second section called the most holy place. Having the golden altar of incense.

And an interesting point here, the altar of incense, if you go and read in, say, the book of Numbers and you hear that this was in the holy place, it was, but it stood just outside the passageway into the most holy place.

It belonged to the holy of holies, although it sat outside of the holy of holies. And the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.

All of this was contained within. Verse 5, Above it were the cherubim of glory, right? Part of the ark, the statues that were created, overshadowing the mercy seat.

And it was in this place that God tabernacled with His people. His visible glory dwelt inside of this place. Both representing that God dwelt amongst His people and that there were reasons that they were separated from Him.

[13:19] So this is the tabernacle. This is what He's referring to in our text in Hebrews. Then, verses 6 and 7, we see that there's a form and order for the tabernacle worship.

Let me read a bit to you again from Kent Hughes. When you have a feel for the tabernacle, you can begin to appreciate its worship. Its daily worship was continual.

It's happening all the time. Worshippers brought their sacrifices to the great bronze altar in the outer courtyard one after another. Week by week, priests were chosen by lots, like casting lots, for the high honor of their career to serve in the first room, the holy place.

There they tended to the seven lampstands morning and evening, keeping them full-flamed and stoked the coals on the altar of incense upon which they dropped handfuls of incense, filling the room with a delicious cloud.

Weekly, they exchanged the bread with fresh and then were privileged to partake of the sacred loaves. But none even dared to glance into the most holy place on pain of death.

[14:31] They had no access whatsoever. Ministry in the Holy of Holies was the domain of the high priest and only once a year.

And what a day it was. During New Testament times, the high priest underwent rigorous preparations for that day. Seven days before the Day of Atonement, the priest left home and stayed day and night in the temple.

During the week, he practiced what he would do on that great day so that he would make no mistake at the pain of death. Right? He went through the rehearsal of it to make sure he got it just

right.

He was especially cautious not to come close to anything that would make him ceremonially unclean. Then on the morning of the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered a burnt offering. Following this, he ritually bathed his entire body and then, instead of putting on his traditional gorgeous robes, donned a sacred white linen tunic along with white undergarments and a white sash and white turban, thus symbolizing that he was free from defilement.

[15:41] Next, he placed his hands on the head of a bull, selected as a sacrifice for his own sins and those of his family and he prayed this, O God, I have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee.

I and my house, as is it written in the law of thy servant Moses, for on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you from all your sins shall you be clean before the Lord.

And they answered after him, blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever.

Then, leaving the bull for a few moments, he turned to two goats nearby and chose lots over them.

One was designated for Jehovah and the other for Azazel, the scapegoat. A piece of crimson wool was tied to the horns of the scapegoat and a thread was bound around the goat to be slaughtered.

Then the goats were left standing together. The high priest now turned to the bull and sacrificed it.

Next, he filled a censer with burning coals from the altar of burnt offerings and entered the Holy of Holies where he poured two handfuls of incense on the coals so that a cloud of incense covered the mercy seat.

[16:55] This done, he exited, obtaining some of the bull's blood which he then sprinkled on the mercy seat and then seven times on the ground before the cover. After this, he sacrificed the goat designated for Jehovah and performed the same ritual in the Holy of Holies.

Upon emerging, he mixed the blood of the bull and the goat, put it on the horns of the altar and sprinkled the altar seven times to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

Then came the patently joyous part of the day's ceremonies. The priest laid both hands on the head of the live goat and confessed all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins and he shall put them on the head of the goat.

That's from Leviticus 16.21. The goat was then led away into the desert amidst the jeering of the people. Bear our sins and be gone. After this, the high priest put off his white garments, bathed again, arrayed himself in his gorgeous robes and completed the burnt offerings of the bull and the goat plus other offerings.

The remains were carried outside the camp and burned. And all along on this day of atonement, people waited with bated breath.

[18:14] The one man, the one time of year who gets to enter into the presence of God and make this sacrifice on this day of atonement, will he do it right?

Will he survive in the presence of God as he makes this sacrifice on our behalf? It was a tense day until finally the high priest emerges and sends away the scapegoat and then there was great rejoicing and celebration to be had.

I want to draw your attention to something in verse 7. The high priest goes and he makes offering for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

Just note the great mercy of God to the Israelites. Ways being made for them to make sacrifice for their sin all throughout the year and God makes a way for their unintentional sins to also be forgiven.

This day of atonement was so incredibly significant to Jewish worship of God but it was inadequate. It was inadequate.

[19:40] It was a divinely instructed dress rehearsal because this had to be repeated again and again and again and again.

It was meant to show them something greater. A greater sacrifice. A higher priest who would come and make a final atoning for all the people who belonged to God.

The mosaic worship this tabernacle worship was a sort of parable in action. as they observed this bloody affair they were meant to be drawn to a greater more sufficient sacrifice for them.

So let's look a little bit further at the inadequacy of the old covenant. First the old covenant had limited access.

Limited access. And you see this in verse 6 and through the first part of verse 9. All these preparations. All these things going about.

[20:53] First that priests had to make sacrifice in any day that a sacrifice was being made. And then this high priest the one man once a year who was given access to God.

Very limited. God dwelt amongst his people in the tabernacle. What a blessing. But the access to him was extremely limited.

The author of Hebrews writes in verse 8, by this the Holy Spirit indicates, and he's referring to the inspired instructions for how the tabernacle was to be arranged and how the tabernacle worship was to take place.

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing.

Verse 9, the first part, which is symbolic for the present age. Now, there is a lot of complication about the translation of verse 8 and 9, and I'm going to spare you it this morning.

[22:01] I don't think the ESV version that I'm using, ESV, does it the best justice. I think more accurately, we would say something like, by this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not opened as long as the tabernacle is still standing.

Verse 9, which is symbolic to that age. What he's trying to communicate is that the Spirit in all of that temple worship, as I've already mentioned, was pointing to something greater that is realized in Christ.

And contextually that makes a lot of sense, because that's exactly where the author of Hebrew goes next. So, the author of Hebrews tells us that the Holy Spirit, the inspirer of the divine instruction, did so to teach us that the old covenant was inadequate.

They and we could not gain access to God by it. Right? Could not gain access by it. There was limited access.

Secondly, the old covenant was inadequate because of its limited efficacy. What it could accomplish was limited.

[23:18] Last half of verse 9 and through 10. According to this arrangement, this working of the high priest on the day of atonement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

It had a limited efficacy. It could clean up on the outside, but not on the inside. This outward cleansing, but not an inward one.

Just a bit ago, Daryl read for us from Psalm 51. Turn with me if you will to Psalm 51. I selected Psalm 51 to be read this morning, and until he read it and I listened to him reading it, I did not make the connection to this text.

How's that for providence? Remember that Psalm 51 is written after David has committed egregious sin. He's been a murderer and an adulterer.

And this is him crying out to God that God would forgive him for this. Verse 1 and 2, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

[24:51] Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Crying out to God, because of who you are, O God, cleanse me, make me pure within.

He asked him to, verse 10, create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Verse 11, don't cast me away from your presence.

And then in verse 16 and 17, he says, for you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You would not be pleased with a burnt offering.

For the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Recognize that David saw the inadequacy of the sacrifice.

He saw that it really didn't accomplish for him what he desperately needed, which was an inward cleansing. And so we believe that David saved, was God's, is with God now in his presence, has unlimited access, did so believing there would be a way that this old system, this old covenant, was

pointing towards something greater, a way that he could in fact be restored to God.

[26:16] So the old covenant was inadequate, limited access, and limited efficacy. I'm aware that it is most probable that there was no one here listening to me say anything about the old covenant that is still a keeper of the old covenant, trying to gain acceptance with God by keeping the old covenant.

I don't know where you'd go to make the sacrifices. The day of atonement doesn't happen any longer. Anyway, I know this is not what you're trying to do, but many of us, so many of us, try to earn God's favor in our works.

Whether we have been delivered by Christ already, found in Him, we often go back to that old self, that old tendency that God would accept us because of now our working, which He never does, which He's never pleased with.

It's because of Christ's working that we're accepted. It's because of who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished, and because by placing our faith in Him, we are found in Him that we are accepted. So let's look at the adequacy of the new covenant. The adequacy of the new covenant. First, in the new covenant, we have unlimited access.

[27:44] We have unlimited access. This. We no longer have need for priests. We no longer have need for sacrifice because Christ has accomplished this.

He has fulfilled all that the old covenant required, and He is our great high priest. If you've been with us, you know we've been talking about His Melchizedekian priesthood, that He lives forever making intercession for us.

verse 25 of chapter 7. We no longer need these things. You don't come to God through me, praise God.

You don't come to God through an Aaronic priest. You come to God through Christ. And in Christ, we have unlimited access.

Verse 11, praise God, starts with the most precious conjunction, but. This was the old covenant. This was all of its inadequacy. The author of Hebrews is saying, 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, and again, I'll spare you the long explanation, but He's talking about His own flesh, Jesus' flesh.

[29:11] 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.

Every year, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies for one day, and every year, he did so by the blood of goats and calves, right? He went through all of that process to make himself ceremonially pure so that he could enter into the presence of God, right?

He went through this process of these inadequate sacrifices, but now we have unlimited access because Jesus Christ offered up himself. He is the adequate sacrifice, right?

He makes atonement, right? Satisfies the wrath of God in our place. Beloved, you must understand sin.

Whether you feel the weight of your sin or not, it has an eternal weight because it is against the holiness of an eternal God.

[30:20] It flies in his face. And the guilt and the shame that you feel for the things that you do is only a tiny measure of the wrath that is due your sin.

It is an eternal wrath because you have rejected his good order. And God, because he is just and he is always all that he is, he doesn't lay aside his justice.

He doesn't overlook your sin. If you're in Christ, he punished your sin on the cross. If you're not in Christ, he will punish your sin in you forever.

But if you are in Christ, he poured out his wrath in Christ. You recall Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, if there's any way that this cup might pass for me, he's picking up Old Testament imagery of the cup of God's wrath.

He knew that's what he was going to go and do. So drink fully of the wrath of God for all who would believe in him.

[31:35] This was the significant thing that happened on the cross of Jesus Christ. Not merely his physical death. And hear me, and hear me carefully. If it meant saving the people in this room, I would die for you guys.

A physical death. That I would do. I would volunteer myself for that. I love you that way. What I could not do is bear the wrath of God for your sin.

I couldn't do it. I couldn't hold up to it. I'm not created for that very thing as Jesus was. Eternal. The God man could bear God's wrath.

All that eternality of his wrath for our sin. So, for God to forgive you of your sin, it must be punished in someone else.

And that is the person of Christ. Matthew chapter 27, verse 50 and 51, Matthew records for us, Jesus hangs on the cross and Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and he doesn't tell us what he says, but I think from John 19 30, we know what he cries at that point is, it is finished.

[32:56] I have now drunk to the very bottom of the cup, the wrath of God and yielded up his spirit. Verse 51 says, and behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

we are granted in Christ full access to God himself, to the holy places, the author of Hebrews says. And so, if you're in Christ this morning, you can step in to the presence of God. You can go to him with anything. When he looks at you, he sees Christ and Christ himself is seated at his right hand praying on your behalf.

Beloved, we have unlimited access to him. My prayer life is so rocked by contemplating this reality. How often I don't go and pray to our God when I am in Christ. Unlimited access.

[34:12] I may not know what to pray. I'm feeling some guilt for something that I've done and don't feel worthy of entering his presence. The truth is, I'm not, but in Christ, I can.

In Christ, I am found worthy to step into the presence of God. This is an astounding truth.

Sometimes I wish we had an ability to time travel, take us all back and let us live in the days of limited access, physically seeing at the tabernacle or seeing the temple, seeing the way in which it was closed off, so that we could really comprehend how significant it is that we have unlimited access.

all I can do myself and encourage you to do is to have an imagination toward that. What would that have been like? To not have a clean conscience.

To not be able to fully have a clean conscience and be able to draw into the presence of God. I think we would greater appreciate and more quickly go to his presence if we did.

So, the adequacy of the new covenant, because there's unlimited access, also because there's unlimited efficacy. What it can accomplish, right, is fully powerful to accomplish.

[35:44] Verse 13 and 14. 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, how much more?

Verse 13, right, if the inadequate sacrifice is good enough for the time, 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.

He makes our consciences clean because of all our sin. And beloved, hear me, the sins past and the sins present, the sins you've committed sitting here in this room, and the sins future, were all paid for in Christ.

His blood covers every one of them. And we don't always respond well to our sin in that reality. very few of us repent the way we ought to repent when we sin. Very few of us flee back to the cross of Christ as we should.

[37:07] And I think in some measure it can be commendable because you all take sin seriously. I think that's a good thing. I think we ought to feel a godly sorrow over our sin.

And the question has been asked of me, how long should I feel sorrow for my sin? My response is, only as long as it takes you to get back to the cross of Christ.

Have your sin break you, utterly destroy you, and then get quickly to the reality of who God is to you in Jesus.

Penal substitutionary atonement. He died in your stead. this thing you're feeling sorrow over, he bore God's wrath for it on the cross.

And have your sorrow turn to a great rejoicing in who Christ is for you. We can have purified consciences in Christ.

[38:12] Paul wrote in Colossians chapter 2, this is verse 16 and 17, he's talking about other matters of ceremonial worship. verse 16, therefore no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

And then he says in verse 17, these are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

The new covenant has unlimited access and unlimited efficacy. I want to close with a reading from Pilgrim's Progress.

Once again, stick around and I'll read you the whole book. This is very early. If you don't know, this is a book written by John Bunyan. It's an allegory.

He's dreaming all along and everything in an allegory represents something else. And there's a man who goes by the name of Christian and he's traveling to the celestial city.

[39:16] This is very early in his journey. Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on each side with a wall and the wall was called salvation.

Therefore it was up this highway that Christian ran but not without great difficulty because of the burden of the load on his back. He's been carrying this big backpack around. It represents his guilt. He ran until he came to a small hill at the top of which stood a cross and at the bottom of which was a tomb. I saw in my dream that when Christian walked up the hill to the cross his burden came loose from his shoulders and fell off his back tumbling down the hill until it came to the mouth of the tomb where it fell in to be seen no more.

Then Christian was relieved and delighted and exclaimed with a joyful heart he has given me rest by his sorrow and life by his death. For a while he stood in front of the cross to look and wonder. It was very surprising to him that the side of the cross should ease him of his burden. He continued looking at the cross until tears began streaming down his cheeks.

[40:32] As he stood looking and weeping three shining ones came to him and greeted him with peace be with you. Then the first said to him your sins are forgiven.

The second stripped him of his rags and dressed him with new clothing. The third put a mark on his forehead and gave him a scroll with a seal on it. The scroll is the promise of the spirit.

He told Christian to review it often as he went on his way and at the end of his journey to turn it in at the celestial gate. After this they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy and went on his way singing.

Thus far I did come burdened with my sin nor could I find relief from my grief within. Until here I came what a place this is.

Here shall be the beginning of full eternal bliss. Now my burden falls from my back forever from the cords that bound it by grace my grief is severed.

[41:36] Blessed cross blessed tomb rather most blessed be the man who there was put to shame a shame he took for me.

Let's pray together.