

Our hope in the blood of the Lamb.  
Hebrews 9:15-28

Romans 7

Luke 1:67-79

Responsive Ephesians 2:1-8

This morning we are going to taking on the last verses of chapter 9, as I have been studying this chapter it has been a challenge to find places to stop and pick up at a later time since it really is all one argument about the law, the temple, and the new covenant administration. So since that is the case, I think to get a sense of the big picture here this morning we should start out by simply just reading chapter 9 in it's entirety. The first half of chapter 9 talks about the temple itself, and the priests temple worship and compares it to Christ who is the fulfillment of all of those examples. The last half that we are looking at this morning takes on the subject of the sacrifices, and in the same point which was given from the beginning of this book, the Author here is pointing to the superiority of Christ even in the sacrifices.

As we talked about last week, Christ being the high priest of our salvation, who minister's in a better temple not made by mankind, but rather in the very presence of God. Again in verse 13 showing how all of the things from the old testament was symbolic of Christ, he says, "For if the blood of bulls and goats and ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ." Again, one is a shadow, or a type, the other is the fulfillment, or anti-type. As we know the sacrifices of animals did not atone for sin, and could not atone for the sin of mankind...but was rather a practice to point to the necessity of Christ, the necessity of his sacrifice. But not only that, it was a constant, even daily reminder that the penalty of sin is death.

Even in the covenants themselves, were sealed and bound in blood. But the difference from the old to the new is that the old covenant was sealed by the blood of animals, where the new has been sealed in the blood of Christ. Christ's blood being shed on the cross accomplished something the old covenant sacrifices never could, which is the purification of our conscience, freeing us from the slavery of dead works of the law to be able to serve the living God. The reality is that it is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, which came some 430 ears before the covenant given to Israel through Moses. Which brings up an interesting point of discussion that I think that we hit on before. As he Author said in chapter 8, the old covenant had been found with faults therefore there was a need for a new covenant. So that begs the question, did God's covenant with Israel fail? The short answer, is yes. Was the failure God's fault? No, for scripture says that Israel rebelled, constantly broke his covenant though he was a husband to them. Using the institution of marriage to explain the severity of this betrayal.

Israel broke the covenant that God made with them, therefore abandoning the covenant themselves making it null and void, therefore there was a need for a new covenant, but this time not with the physical offspring of Abraham, but rather instead with the true Israel, the spiritual offspring of Abraham. So again, as I have been saying now for the past few weeks, the old covenant is gone, its laws, its rules, the traditions, the temple worship, the sacrifices, all gone because it has been broken and is no longer valid. But even so that covenant which was given to the nation of Israel was broken by Israel itself, it still operated as intended, and still indeed does. And that is to convict, and to point to the fact that there is non righteous, no, not one.

So now that there has been established a new covenant, which is based on better promises, and in fact the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant that said, Through your seed all the nations shall be blessed. This promise wasn't just to one nation, one people group as the old covenant was given to Israel, but rather through the one, through Christ all nations, ever creed, ever walk, every nationality of mankind shall be blessed. And what is this blessing? Well, it's the new birth, it is the new covenant in which we enter with God through the blood that was shed sealing this covenant between God and man for all eternity. God establishing this new covenant was not some new idea that he came up with because the other failed, it was intended from the beginning as we saw in Jeremiah 31, and in the promises to Abraham, just as we read in Luke this morning, "As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all those who hate us to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham." Notice, the prophets have spoken of Christ from since the world began, and it is the mercy promised, and the fulfillment of his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham.

So again, where does this put the old covenant? GONE!, it is no longer operating in all of those who are the children of Abraham, for we are children of the promise, not children of the covenant, we are children of grace, not children of Law. I know that most of us here already know a lot of this stuff, and it has been something that we have been covering pretty heavily over the past few weeks, but if you think about it, it is the focus of the text we have been studying is it not? So, with so much time being spent on the comparisons between the two covenants the author here must have deemed it to be essential to drill home in his readers. And remember this letter was written to a group of Hebrews, a group of Israelites who have left all the old traditions aside to follow Christ, which in fact would put them at odds with their own friends, and families. It's not hard to understand the temptation to fall into some various lines of believing, being deceived to do so, such as we found here in chapter 1, in the worshiping of angels.. or what we saw in the book of Galatians where some had come in and were teaching that you needed more than Christ, you needed Christ, and the law.

I won't get into that heavily right now, but I will just quickly point out that our Reformed brethren might want to rethink the role of the law and the old covenant, for that was the whole teaching of Galatians, It is not Christ+tradition, or Christ+ the law, it is only Christ, it is only he who is sufficient, it is he who supersedes, it is he who has fulfilled all of these other things. So if you are one who thinks that now you have been saved and have been now granted the ability to follow the law, you might want to go and read Galatians, you might want to listen up as we have been going through Hebrews. If you are relying on anything else other than the mercy and grace of God alone, through Christ alone, apart from the law, apart from tradition then I am afraid you have made the gospel into something it is not.

So if this is the case, why the law then? Why the covenant with Moses and Israel? If it was already planned previously to be replaced, and if it seems to apparently operate outside of the promises to Abraham, why was it given? Well again we have to go back to Galatians where Paul instructs his readers that the law was given because of transgression until the offspring, the promised seed of Abraham should come." It was a tutor, a teacher, or another way to look at it, a nanny. It was to instruct God's people, the physical offspring of Abraham in the ways of God. It separated them from the other nations, making them a holy nation, set apart, a living example of God's judgement, and provision. But this covenant that was given in this interim between the promise and the fulfillment did not change the human conditions.

In fact what it did was point out the human condition dire state before God, it showed without a doubt the guilty state of mankind for they were incapable of keeping God's law, which was the whole purpose and role of the sacrifices, to be a constant atonement for the sins constantly committed against God's law. God even made a provision for the unknown sins, pointed out here in verse 7 of chapter 9 in Hebrews which says, ok, verse 6, "Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services, but into the second part, the inner chamber, the holy of holies, the presence of God they high priest would enter once a year, with blood which he would offer for himself and for the peoples sin that was committed in ignorance"

Our need for justification before God could never be fulfilled in the law in which we are in constant rebellion of. The law can never justify those who break it, therefore our only hope is to turn away from ourselves, to not rely on our own ability to be righteous before God, to be sinless, perfect and holy, but instead to seek a refuge of faith in the pardoning grace of our loving and merciful savior, not the law, but the promise. So the reality is that our standing with God has changed. Unlike the old covenant which did not change the state of man, the new covenant does for with it is the new birth, for with it is a new heart able to love God, and to love others and in this fulfilling god's righteous law. But again, we have not just exchanged one works of righteousness for another, that is to say our works within the new covenant do not justify us, you can be loving towards others but without the new birth that does not change your status before God. Without the new birth and the washing of our sins in the blood of Christ, anything we do, whether it is an attempt to follow the old covenant laws, or an attempt to live out our lives as loving people, if done without Christ it is as scripture says, filthy rags.

This distinction is exactly what the book of James was talking about, Works does not trump faith, you can not work your way into heaven, you can not work your way to be justified, BUT if you are justified in Christ, then the works will flow outward from a new heart. Do you see what I am getting at? This is both a challenging, and can be scary realization if you really let it sink in. IT goes to the very heart, the very motives of not only your actions, but your life, your thoughts, your desires. As humans it is natural for us to want a list, to have a set of boundaries telling us what we can and cannot do. But really that is not found in the new covenant, sure Paul lays out a few lists of people who as he says, will not inherit the kingdom, but let me ask you this....are you on this list? Galatians 5:19 "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like...notice Paul says, and the like, so this isn't even an exhaustive list. So I ask again, are you on this list?

Or how about Paul's list in Romans? Chapter 1-29, "being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil mindedness, they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful." If we are to be honest with ourselves we can say, yes..there are things in those lists that describe myself. But don't you get it? Don't you see that is the beauty of the new birth, and the new covenant in Christ Jesus. That despite our sins, we are yet still Christs. Now this does not give us a license to sin, an excuse or a reason.. for Paul also says, Should I continue in sin so grace may abound? The logic being, since God is so gracious to forgive, and his forgiveness shows his grace and mercy should we not give him even more opportunity to exercise that mercy and grace? Does that not make God even more gracious, and more merciful?

Well, I don't think I really need to answer those questions because well, Paul did by saying, certainly not! It's just absurd. So we do not have an excuse, or a license to sin, but when we inevitably do, for we are still in this sinful body and we still wrestle with the sinful desires of the flesh, both of body and of mind, we have an advocate, a mediator for us if we but confess our sins to him he promises he will remember them no more. Imagine your judgement day, standing before God in all of his glory, how repulsive and revolting we truly are....yet he does not see that, what he sees is the blood of Christ, the bond and seal of the new covenant, before God we have been washed as white as snow, not for what we have done, or what we can do, but what Christ has done. What Christ has accomplished on the cross, the blood of bulls and lambs could not, eternal redemption, sanctification, and justification once and for all.

The once and for all is key here, verse 24 “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the presence of God for us, not that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of another he then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world, but now, once at the end of the ages he has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly wait for him he will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Our redemption is accomplished, it is finished, it is complete. Does this mean that we are sinless, no, for while we may be redeemed, covered by the blood of Christ we still are stained by the sin of this world, we still live in this body and struggle daily with the flesh as Paul said that we read this morning in Romans “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do. IF, then, I do what I will not to do I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Think upon what he is saying here, Paul, and apostle of Christ struggling, and fighting against sin, what I will to do, that I do not do, but what I hate I do. If Paul had such struggles do you not think so will we? Continuing on verse 17 “But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me that is in my flesh nothing good dwells, for to will is present with me but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do I do not do, but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.” Paul is not meaning a law here like one that is written down, but rather a natural law, like gravity, evil is ever present, we are sinful fallen creatures who are condemned in our sin, that is, without the blood of Christ to cover us.

Verse 22, “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law in my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” Paul recognized that even though his desire and his will is to follow God, there is a constant struggle between that desire, and the law of nature, the law of sin in the flesh. And that these two “laws” as it were, are in war with each other, for in the flesh we sin, but in our hearts we desire God, and seek to please him therefore being convicted of our sin we cry out to him for forgiveness. Verse 24, “Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” This is not just some little struggle with Paul, nor is it with us....Paul recognizing that this body is tainted by sin, it is a body of death and he cries out to be free from it....knowing that one day he will be, but it shows this desire to be free from the sin that plagues him, and in very much the same way we can share in this experience, recognizing our wretchedness, our fallen self, when we see the vileness of our sin..but what does Paul do?

Does he wallow in this depressive state? No, verse 25 “ I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.”

So it is not as if he is justifying that anything done in the body, that is in the flesh is ok because his mind is right with God, this is not the idea that some may hold separating our actions from our desires. sin is still sin, which is still a rebellion against God. But instead of recognizing that his sin has been payed, in full by Christ on the cross, so that when he does sin, he can repent, and move on in confidence knowing full well that law of sin which rules in his members is covered by the blood of Christ. Look what he says in chapter 8, “ There is therefore now no condemnations to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.” Christ has payed it all, we are bound by his blood in this new covenant that is established by God through Christ. One in which we are secure for all eternity, for it is unconditional, unlike the old law which Israel broke, the new that is written on our hearts is Christ himself. It is he working through us to will and to do, not us working through the law seeking to be justified, for we are justified already in Christ.

My hope, and my desire for each and every one of us is to keep these realities close to heart, and ever present in our mind. So that when we do fall into sin, when our mind betrays us so that we do that which we will not to do, know that your sin has already been defeated, it has already been payed for, and we are slaves to it no longer. What a glorious, merciful and gracious God who would love such sinners, who would have mercy upon us who fail him daily. When sin arises, when the holy spirit operating with in you convicts you of sin, cry out to this merciful God and he promises that he will forgive, but not only that, seeing the blood of Christ he will forget. I think that it would do us much good to be reminded of this also, for God does not keep a record of the sins of his children, so therefore we should not either. Once we repent, we need to turn and continue on, do not dwell on that which you have been forgiven, but instead guard against that which is coming. And the same can be said in our own interpersonal relationships, we are to model ourselves after Christ, he is our standard, and we to must be willing to forgive each other, and with that comes the ability to move past those sins, to forget the wrongs done toward us and move on in love.

This is the cycle of the christian life, we live, striving to please our saviour, but we are yet in this body of death so we do not meet the mark, instead we fall, we fail, but Christ is ready to forgive if we are just to repent, if we cry out to him for forgiveness, he promises that he will. The realities that sin is an ever present law, or force, or nature of our flesh makes the salvation and grace of God even that much more glorious! Giving us an escape out from under this natural law of rebellion that is in our members, giving us hope in the new covenant in his blood, not like the old which condemns, and kills..but instead we find grace, mercy, and love.

Let this be our heart, let this be our mind, that while we were lost and enslaved to the desires of our flesh, Christ died for us. He loved us while we were lost, while we were rebellious, he loved us, though we hated him, he loved us though we despised him, surely now that we are his children, even when we fail, he still loves us. For if he didn't we would be lost in hopeless condemnation, but we are not for as Paul says, There is therefore now no condemnation for those who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For those of us who are not walking according to the old law of condemnation, but rather of the new law of Christ, which is of the spirit.

Have joy, be at peace, and rest upon this God who is not only able, but willing to forgive, who seeks us out, who's holy spirit indwelling in us convicts us. Yes, it can be painful but be thankful for the conviction for without it were would we be? The holy spirit drives us back to God when we fail, the conviction drives us to repentance, without it there is no repentance, without it there is no hope for we then would still be lost in our sins. But, if we are Christ's we have this hope, we have this helper operating in us to convict, he does not condemn, but rather makes us to yearn for forgiveness, to cry out in repentance.

Let us be ever mindful of Christ in us, let us be ever mindful of his mercy and grace toward us, let us be ever mindful of his Love toward us wretched, vial, people though we may be, we will one day be free from this body of death, clothed in white robes and worship in the very presence of our Lord and Savior. Free from this law of sin in our flesh, what we see now is just a small picture of this reality, The forgiveness that we experience here, is but a taste of that to come. This should ever drive us to praise God, as Paul says, though I am a wretch, I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For in him we have a mediator, we have forgiveness, we have hope.