

Week 17: FORMED Series

Living with a Cleansed Conscience

Hebrews 9:11-28

¹¹ But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹⁵ For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

¹⁶ In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, ¹⁷ because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. ¹⁸ This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. ¹⁹ When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. ²⁰ He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." ²¹ In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. ²² In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

²³ It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

From this week's sermon:

In the message this week, Rod highlighted some wonderful truths of what Jesus has done for us:

1. **Jesus secured our eternal redemption.** Redemption means being rescued and set free at a great cost.
2. **Jesus frees us from guilt and shame.** A cleansed conscience is the freedom of knowing that what Jesus has forgiven no longer has to define you.
3. **Jesus frees us for worship and service.** Jesus didn't cleanse your conscience just to give you peace. He cleansed your conscience to give you purpose.

Scholarly Insight:

Guthrie's Overview:¹

Having established the importance of blood and death in the OT covenant, the author goes on to apply this principle to the sacrifice of Christ. The analogy of the new covenant means that what was needed for the old is no less necessary for the new, but as with all such typological comparisons, the emphasis is not so much on repetition as on fulfillment on a higher level that transcends the imperfections of the old system. The old sacrifices related to an earthly sanctuary, but the sacrifice of Christ to a heavenly one. And whereas the OT sacrifices—even the climactic sacrifice on the Day of Atonement—had to be constantly repeated, the sacrifice of Jesus is one perfect offering, once for all, after which there is no more atonement to be made. In these verses, then, we revisit several of the themes already developed in the discussion of Christ's priestly ministry, but with increased emphasis on the "once for all" finality of this culminating point in God's unfolding purpose for the redemption of his people. In that context, there is also a rare (for Hebrews) reference to Christ's second coming as the event in which the process of salvation will be rounded off.

Ramond Brown's Conclusion (9:15-22):²

Harassed by their opponents and threatened by persecution, these first-century Jewish Christians were in danger of falling away (3:12) or of slipping away (2:1) from the moorings of Christian truth. Under the law they appeared to have had so much. Priests had served as their mediators, the sacrificial system had offered some spiritual security, and as Jews they had believed themselves part of God's chosen people, destined to an assured future. In his pastoral concern our writer emphasizes three assured facts. In Christ we have a forgiveness which covers our past (22), a mediator in the present, and an inheritance in the future which no-one can take away (15). These three issues are not confined to the first century; we face them too. In times of crisis and despair our contemporaries suffer from the problem of loneliness. Hemmed in by our circumstances, sickness, bereavement, the breakdown of a marriage, the collapse of business or the end of a career, we can be terribly lonely. In moments such as these we long for companionship. We cry desperately for the help of Almighty God. But if we are not believers, how can we approach the holy and righteous God? We need a mediator. Longing for companionship and understanding in our distress and, worst of all, feeling isolated in the presence of a holy God, we too need someone who will go between us and God. It must be one who is not remote but alongside us. Moreover, modern people are also confronted by the problem of death. This writer shares with his readers a message of serene confidence about the future. The teaching of this epistle not only had great things to say to its first readers; its message has striking relevance in the contemporary world. Verse 15 reminds us that Jesus Christ is the answer to our problem of guilt, loneliness and death. Our past sin is forgiven: a death has occurred that redeems. Our present access is assured: Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. Our future inheritance is imperishable: those who are called . . . receive the promised eternal inheritance.

¹ George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, (Zondervan Academic, 2009), 309.

² Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, (IVP, 2021), Hebrews 9:15-22.

For Reflection:

- Where am I still living under guilt that Jesus has already removed?
- What lie or accusation keeps me from drawing near to God?
- What would change this week if I truly believed my conscience had been cleansed?
- In what area is Jesus inviting me to serve Him with freedom rather than fear?

For Discussion:

1. Read Hebrews 9:11-28 aloud together. What is one word, phrase or image that stands out to you on this reading, and why?
2. The passage continues to contrast the old covenant sacrifices and Christ's sacrifice. What are some of the specific differences highlighted (verses 12-14 and 24-26)?
3. Verse 14 asks "how much more" will Christ's blood cleanse our conscience compared to the old sacrifices. What do you think having a *cleansed conscience* means... practically speaking... is it different from feeling less guilty?
4. Rod described redemption as being rescued and set free at a great cost. Has there been a time in your own life that you have felt the weight of that cost? Freedom is free to us, but cost a great deal.
6. What's the difference between conviction (which draws us toward God) and shame (which drives us away from Him)? Which one tends to characterize your inner voice (1) day to day, (2) after you've realised that you have sinned, (3) after you have confessed and repented of that sin?
7. As you look over your life, is there a specific failure, sin, or season you still let define you, even though you have surrendered it to Jesus and he has dealt with it?
8. Raymond Brown notes that Hebrews' first readers were "in danger of falling away" partly because they felt they'd lost the securities of the old system: priest, sacrifice, chosen status. Are there any securities that we modern Christians often cling to that Christ has actually replaced with something better?
9. Rod's message distinguished between Jesus cleansing us *for peace and reconciliation* (with God) and cleansing us *for purpose (service and mission)*. Which one do you tend to stop at? What would it look like to move from the first to the second?
10. Guthrie notes Christ's sacrifice was "once for all", no more atonement needed, ever. If you actually believed that deep within your soul, how might your life look different? Examples: you may stop doing (earning salvation, over-apologizing, self-punishing, re-litigating old sin) or start doing (worshiping freely, praying boldly, serving without fear)?

Pray for each other:

Jesus, Thank You that your blood was enough. Once and for all it has dealt with our sin. Where we still carry guilt, please help us to lay it aside. Where shame keeps us from drawing near to you, help us overcome it and experience intimacy with you. Where fear or insecurity keep us from worshiping and serving you, help us know our identity and status in you and live freely. You haven't only reconciled us and given us peace. You have given us purpose... may we listen to your Holy Spirit as we step into this week.

Amen.

Formation Practice:

As we exploring being Formed by Jesus this series; we want to encourage you to do this simple exercise every day for the next 2 months. It can take 5 minutes or more, whatever you are able to achieve (and as you do it more and more, you'll likely find it easier to spend longer listening and reflecting).

"Draw Near Daily" Rhythm (5-10 minutes)

- ***Come:*** *Quiet yourself before God.*
- ***Confess:*** *Be honest about sin/struggle.*
- ***Receive:*** *Remember what Christ has done.*
- ***Respond:*** *Take one step of obedience.*