

Covenant Community

Recipients of a New Covenant – Part 1

Dr. David Platt

March 1, 2009



RECIPIENTS OF A NEW COVENANT – PART 1 **Hebrews 10:19-39**

God, help us to recover our sense of your holiness. If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Hebrews 10. I am really excited about where we are going over the next few months as a community of faith in the Word. We're coming off the heels of a month where around 500 folks joined in membership with this faith family, and so, what we're going to do is, whether you've been a member of this faith family for ten or fifteen years, or ten or fifteen minutes, for us together to really think about what it means to be the church with one another, what it means to be a body who loves, cares for, supports one another in a way that resounds to the glory of Christ in all nations.

A Covenant Community...

What does the church really look like in Scripture? We're going to start over the next couple of weeks. We're going to dive into Hebrews 10, starting in verse 19, and I want to show you two primary foundational truths for understanding what it means to be a part of the church. Truth number one is that we are recipients of a new covenant. The title of the journey we're going on is, "Covenant Community". These two truths: One, we're recipients of a new covenant, and that's what we're going to talk about tonight, and then next week, we're going to dive into how we are members of a new community, and how the covenant that Christ inaugurates with us, creates with us, establishes a community, and how the community of faith is grounded in the covenant of Christ, and how Christ's covenant with us creates community that we have with one another. I am praying that over the coming months, as we walk this journey together, that God will create in this community of faith, in this faith family, just a spirit of unity and of peace, love, care, and comfort, that He intends for His church to have, intends for this body to have.

When I think about this faith family, when I think about, even in this room, in addition to those who worship normally on Sunday mornings and gather together in this room at two different times, just the whole body of believers known as The Church at Brook Hills, and even the people in this room to think about the different situations and circumstances that are represented in lives and families across the room. It's really overwhelming when you think about it. When you think about families that things are going really well in, and there are families across our faith family that things are not going well in. I know that, likely in this room, there are marriages represented in this room that are struggling. There are husbands, wives in this room that are wondering if this thing is even worth fighting for, and other men and women who are wrestling with wounds from prior relationships, and teenagers that are facing all kinds of different pressures and temptations and struggle with all kinds of different sins and temptations in our lives.

The reality is that if the statistics are true, nearly half of the men in this faith family are struggling in some way with pornography, others struggling with anger and anxiety, maybe

even depression, this silent hidden struggle that so many people walk through, even in the church, and oftentimes, find themselves walking through that alone. You think about just the multiplicity of different situations and circumstances represented in a body of Christ like this, and what I want to show us over the next couple of weeks is that Christ intends for His gospel...for the gospel to meet us with hope and healing at the deepest part of our being, and He intends for us to discover that hope and healing in the context of community with one another.

This is huge because, even tonight, we're going to...just to let you know...we're about to take down one massive dose of Old Testament history and theology. Tonight is not for the faint of heart, okay? If you worked hard to get here through snow, then we're going to make sure it's worth your time. We're going to dive into heavy stuff tonight, and you're going to be tempted to think, "What does this stuff that happened thousands of years ago to the people of Israel and all these traditions or customs that were set up in the Old Testament, what does that have to do with those hurts, those struggles, those circumstances you just mentioned that we're walking through in the 21st century?" I want to invite you to hang with me, to hang with me through some thick Old Testament stuff, because I promise...I promise we will discover in God's Word truths that are far deeper, far more significant than anything you can find in popular or secular psychology, anything you can find on the self-help aisle of the local bookstore; eternally valuable, eternally relevant truths that are life transforming.

Recipients of a New Covenant...

Tonight, we're going to talk about two truths, and we may make it to the second one, and I've been praying all week long that God, by His grace, would enable me to do justice to these truths that He would enable me to communicate these truths for the wonder they contain. They revolve around being recipients of a new covenant. What does that mean and why is that significant?

Hebrews 10:19, we're just going to get through verse 22. Let's read through there, Hebrews 10:19:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Those four verses are so packed full of meaning. The only problem is we have a hard time seeing those verses for the glorious, life transforming verses they are, because we come to the book of Hebrews at a little bit of a disadvantage. We don't have some of the Old Testament context that's necessary for understanding these verses. What I want us to do is I want us to take Hebrews 10:19-22. I want to show you these two truths, and we're going to unpack how significant they are based on some study in the Old Testament.

We have access to God.

Truth number one: We have access to God. If that truth does not astound you, you have no clue who God is. We have access to God. Now, here's the picture. Hebrews 10:19-22 is telling us we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place. Some translations say a

"boldness", "access", "authorization", "freedom" to enter the Most Holy Place. In order to understand how huge that is, we've got to understand the Old Testament precedent that leads up to this.

The Old Covenant

So, turn with me back to the left, Exodus 19; the second book in the Bible, Exodus 19. What we need to do in order to understand the gravity and significance of what it means to be the recipient of a new covenant is we've got to see the new covenant next to the old covenant. So, go with me to Exodus 19 and look with me at this old covenant picture. What happened here in Exodus 19; a little lead up here. God delivered His people; His people were slaves in Egypt. He delivered them to the Passover, out of slavery in Egypt, brought them to the Red Sea, sent them through the middle of the sea on dry land. He led them, the pillar of cloud and fire and sent bread from heaven to feed them. He gave them water from rocks, and He leads them to this place in Exodus 19 called Mount Sinai, and this is where God is going to inaugurate His covenant relationship with His people through Moses, the Mosaic Covenant; the old covenant. Moses was the leader of the people of Israel.

So, there at Mount Sinai, God comes to Moses. Look in verse 3. He begins to speak to him on the mountain. Verse 3 says,

Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

So, God is inaugurating this covenant with His people, and He's going to meet with them on Mount Sinai to inaugurate this covenant. However, I want you to listen to the regulations that are involved with God meeting with His people. Look down in verse 10. God said to Moses, *"Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people."* Here's what you do. *"Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.'" Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain."*

You get down to verse 16. This is what happened. *"On the morning of the third day there was thunder..."* Just imagine this scene,

...thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him."

Can you imagine that? I mean, this is not just like snow on a Sunday morning. This is coming to a mountain and the mountain is shaking. That's intense. Can you imagine us as a people standing before a mountain, and we're trembling before we even get there. We get there, and we see smoke, like smoke from a furnace, coming up from this mountain because God Himself is descending on it like fire, and the mountain itself is shaking. You don't want to get near that mountain. "I'm not touching it. I'm not going up. Moses, you're going up." God meeting with His people, and they are trembling.

Don't miss the command here. When God inaugurates His covenant and comes down among His people, the command is, "Stay back in fear. You will be struck down if you come near the presence of God." It's the picture here in Exodus 19 and throughout the Old Testament. You don't play around with the presence of God. You don't take the presence of God casually.

So, this is how God inaugurates this covenant. However, in this covenant, this is what starts in Exodus 20: It's the Ten Commandments. God begins to promise His people that He's going to dwell with them. He's going to be with them, and it begs the question, "If this is what's involved with the presence of God in the middle of His people, then how can God, a holy God, actually dwell with a sinful people?"

Turn to the right, and you'll come to Exodus 25, and this is what God sets up. Now, obviously, we know that God is omnipresent. God is present everywhere. However, what we're about to see is how God, in His glory, will dwell in a powerful way in the presence of His people. Look in Exodus 25:8. This is how it's going to happen. God says, "*Have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.*" So, what God says is, "I'm going to dwell among you in a tabernacle."

The way this tabernacle is set up is you had an outer court to the tabernacle. Then, you had an inner court, and then you had the inmost place, the Holy of Holies. If you could picture almost this stage, and this would be completely insufficient, and those of you who like drums will enjoy this analogy. However, the picture is...picture the outer court here. You go, and there's a passage through which you go to the inner court, and then you've got the Most Holy Place back here and there's a veil. There's a curtain that separates the Most Holy Place which is where the glory of God is going to dwell, and what's going to be in the Most Holy Place?

Well, he starts talking about it right after this, verse 10: "*Have them make a chest of acacia wood...*" This chest is literally an ark, not like Noah's ark, not like a boat. This is a chest of wood. It's called in the Scriptures the "Ark of the Covenant", because what's going to go inside that chest, in addition to a couple of other things, is the covenant, the law of God that He gives to Moses here. Moses is going to put that in the covenant, His law before His people. It's what He says in verse 16, "The ark of the Testimony." The testimony is what you're going to put in there and then on top of it, listen to this, verse 17: "*Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover.*" Cherubim in Scripture are symbolic of the presence of God. If you remember back to Genesis 3, when God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, do you remember what He put there at the Garden gate? The cherubim, the flaming sword flashing back and forth showing that man had been banished from the presence of God that it enjoyed, in that sense, in Genesis 1 and 2.

So the picture here is the presence of God symbolized by these cherubim. Verse 19:

Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark of the Testimony, which I will give you. There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

I'll try to simplify this. What you've got is you've got this chest, the Ark of the Covenant, the covenant, the law of God inside the chest. There is a cover on top. It's called an atonement cover, and what you have on either side of the atonement cover are these cherubs, one on this side, one on this side, symbolic of the presence of God looking down upon His law in the middle of His people, and this is the picture that God says will show you, "My glory dwelling among you in the tabernacle." That's what's in the inmost place.

Now, here's the deal. Not just anybody went prancing into the inmost holy place. Sinful man before a holy God, as we saw in Exodus 19, is a serious thing. So how...how can God in His glory, in His holy glory, dwell in the middle of sinful people? These are people who, while Moses is getting this instruction from God, they have, already at the base of the mountain, erected a golden calf, and they're worshipping an idol. These are a sinful people. We see ourselves in them. So, we know that.

So, how can God dwell among a sinful people like this and interact with them through His presence? What God does is, you flip over to the right, and you come to Exodus 28. God calls out priests; priests who will be intermediaries, go-betweens between sinful people and a holy God. Exodus 28:1: *"Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests."* What God set up was this group of people, the priests who would serve in the Tabernacle, and they would be the go-betweens between a sinful people and a holy God, and the chapters that follow start talking about how the priests have to be cleansed and purified in order to be in the presence of God.

Then, when you get to the book of Leviticus, God outlines what the priests will do, all kinds of different offerings and sacrifices in light of the peoples' sin before holy God. Turn with me there to Leviticus 16. Now, while you're turning there, you might be tempted to think, "That's kind of a cool job. You're a priest. You get to go into the Tabernacle, maybe even the inmost place if you're the high priest." Lest we think this is a really cool job, we look at Leviticus 10, and we see Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons that are mentioned there, and one day, they get a little casual with their priestly duties, and they do things not according to the standards that God had set, and immediately, they're consumed by fire. There's not a lot of job security in this one if you do things wrong. This is serious stuff, for man to be in the presence of a holy God. You've got to come only when invited and on His terms, not any terms you create. That's the picture that's set up here in the Old Testament.

So, there were all types of different offerings and sacrifices that they would make. However, all of this sacrificial system revolved around one day, and this was God's provision for how His holy presence could dwell in the middle of a sinful people. His provision was an annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16 tells us what would happen on that particular day. Look at Leviticus 16:29. This is the overall description here. Now "atonement" means to reconcile or be reconciled to something. You can kind of remember this when you look at "atone", those two words, "at

one", to be made "at one with something", to be reconciled with something. So, how can sinful people be reconciled to a holy God? The Day of Atonement; here's how, verse 29,

This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work - whether native-born or an alien living among you - because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.

So, here's what God set up. Once a year...one day a year, one man...not everybody, not even every priest...one priest, the high priest, one day a year would go into the inmost place where the Ark of the Covenant was and offer a sacrifice that would atone for the peoples' sins.

Now, what was involved in this whole picture on the Day of Atonement? Three elements I want to show you that are extremely important. One, you have a priest entering an earthly sanctuary; a priest entering an earthly sanctuary. We come back and begin to fill in the gaps of what Leviticus 16 teaches. Leviticus 16:4 talks about what the priest needs to wear, how he needs to purify himself, cleanse himself, because he's about to go into the presence of God. You take a really good Saturday night bath for this one, because you've got something to do the next morning that you've got to be ready for. You put on the right clothes that God says to put on; you're clean and pure and cleansed before you go into the presence of God. This was an intense deal.

The priest is the only one...everybody would be standing outside the Tabernacle...the priest is the only one who would go in, and the priest, literally, had bells sewn into the hem of his garment. Why? So that when he goes into the Most Holy Place, you can hear him ringing around as he moves throughout there, and if the bells stop ringing, you know the priest has stopped breathing. He's been struck down in the presence of God. Tradition tells us they would tie a rope around his ankle and leave the other end of the rope outside so that when he went in, if he was struck down, who wants to go in after him? After that, nobody. You could pull him out. There's a man who's going to meet with God.

Can you imagine the anxiety in this scene? You are standing there silent, not even daring to breathe as this man walks in, and you hear those bells, and you're listening for those bells. When he goes in, he doesn't stare around for a while; he doesn't have a seat and kick back and relax. He doesn't take some pictures. He's in and out, and you sit there listening for those bells, and then when he comes out, the community of faith breathes a sigh of relief. A man just met with God in His glorious presence, intense, a priest entering an earthly sanctuary.

What would he do when he got in there? Second element: The blood of a spotless animal; the blood of a spotless animal. Now, actually, there are three animals involved on the Day of Atonement here. You get to the end of verse 5, and it says, "*From the Israelite community the high priest is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.*" So, two goats and a ram, and what the priest is to do is he's to offer the ram as a

sacrifice to atone for his sins, because the priest isn't perfect. He wasn't pure of his own accord. So, he had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, and then, he would take one of the goats. One of the goats lives. We'll get to him in a moment. However, the other goat is sacrificed, and the blood of that goat serves to atone for all the sins of the people of God, the Israelites.

Now, you might be thinking, "Poor ram and goat. Why do they have to die? Why does there have to be blood involved in this thing? What's the point?" The point is twofold. This is not in your notes, a little extra, no charge. The picture is twofold. One, blood is cleansing. It's a picture we see in Scripture, even in the very next chapter. Leviticus 17:11-14 talks about how the blood represents life, cleansing. So, that's a picture we see all throughout Scripture.

However, even deeper than that, the blood is a picture of a substitute. Take a step deeper into some Old Testament theology, and we go back to Genesis 2. Do you remember what God told Adam and Eve? He said, "If you sin, you will surely die." Ladies and gentlemen, from the very beginning of this book and from the very beginning of history, the payment for sin has been death, period. That is the judgment due sin: Death. You say, "Well, Adam and Eve were still alive by Genesis 4 after sin entered in Genesis 3. They didn't die." However, death did enter into the picture in Genesis 3. Who died? There were animals that were sacrificed to provide a covering for Adam and Eve in their sin.

So, the picture is the priest would take these animals and, in their death, their blood...look at this picture down in verse 11. Here's what would happen.

Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

So, that's what he does for his own sins, and then he takes the goat for the sins of the Israelites.

He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

So, don't miss it. This is huge, this picture here. It's the whole setup, the Ark of the Covenant, cherubs, atonement cover. The priest goes in and takes this blood of sacrifice, a substitute, and he sprinkles it over the atonement cover. Why? The picture is so that holy God, symbolized His presence by these cherubs, looking down upon His law, a law that was broken by sinful people, but looking down on that law and, instead of seeing a broken law, He sees blood, the blood of another, and He sees that judgment towards sin has been satisfied, the wrath towards sin has been satisfied, and in this way, God is both just toward sin and gracious toward sinners at the exact same time. That's the picture that is set up here in the Day of Atonement with this blood, that when God looks down on a broken law,

instead of seeing the broken law, He sees this blood as a substitute sacrifice of another, and the sins of the people are atoned for.

The priest would come out after doing this, and he would take the other goat, the goat who made it through the first round. Now, look down in verse 20, what he does with that goat.

When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.

This is the picture: The scapegoat, a goat that represented all the sins of the people of the Israel being taken into the wilderness and let go in a solitary place as a picture of God's forgiveness for His peoples' sin.

So, that was the picture that was set up. You've got a priest that enters an earthly sanctuary and offers blood as an atonement for sins. The only problem with this whole picture was that it was a sacrifice that needed repeating. It needed to be repeated over and over and over and over again because they would do this once a year, and the next year, they would need to do it again, and the next year, they would need to do it again, and their hearts were still sinful and unchanged, and they were still separated from the presence of God. So, they would need to do this over and over and over again.

That's what the effect of this whole picture that this was a reminder of their sins. More than anything else, the Day of Atonement was a reminder of the sin that plagued the people of God. It was a once a year reminder that they were still separated from the presence of God, a once a year reminder they still needed a priest, a sinful priest at that, to represent them before a holy God.

This is where you come back to Hebrews 10. Come back with me. Make the connection with me. Hebrews 10:1, this is exactly what the author of Hebrews says. Hebrews 10:1,

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual, [Listen, verse 3] an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The Day of Atonement served as a reminder year after year after year after year that they were a sinful people separated from the presence of a holy God. It was an incredible picture in the Old Testament, old covenant, but it was incomplete and ultimately ineffective.

So, with that background, Exodus 19, stay back in fear; Day of Atonement, one man, once a year, can go into the inmost place, and he gets in and gets out as quickly as he can, because sinful man and a holy God do not mix. Sinful man cannot be in the presence of a holy God.

The New Covenant

So, with that background in the old covenant, we come to Hebrews 10:19, and the author says, this is new covenant here, "*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place...*" Stop right there. What? We, brothers, we as the people of God in the church have confidence to enter where? Freedom to enter where? Authorization to enter where? Access to go where? The Most Holy Place where the presence of God dwells? Absolutely. Old Testament, old covenant commands: Stay back in fear; new covenant command: Draw near in faith; come near to the presence of God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

This is boldness. Think about it. What only one man could do once a year in the old covenant is now the privilege that is enjoyed by every man or woman who trusts in Christ. This is what the author of Hebrews here just makes this comparison so clear. Go over a couple chapters to the right, Hebrews 12. Look at verse 18. He takes this picture from Exodus 19, and he brings it in. Catch the gravity here, the significance here. Look at this comparison.

Hebrews 12:18, the author says, "*You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm...*" He's describing Exodus 19,

"...to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Christian, you have a privilege that Old Testament saints only dreamed might be possible: Unlimited access to God, authorization to go to the presence of God at any moment of any day. How is this possible? How can sinful people, you and I...people, dirty in sin, how can you and I enter into the Most Holy Place?

Look at Hebrews 10:19, "*Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place...*" By the fact that we are good people, by the fact that we attend church, by how hard we try to be good and pure and holy? No, "*We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...*" He was the provision. Not old covenant annual sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, but new covenant, the abiding sacrifice in the death of Jesus Christ. His blood guarantees, provides, supplies access to the presence of God. We know there was this curtain, the veil that separated, even in the Old Testament, separated the people of God, even the priests, from the Most Holy Place, and we know, the Gospels tell us, that when Jesus died on that cross, what happened to that curtain? Torn in two, "rent asunder", some translations say, gone. The path, the access to God opened up to the people of God by the death of Christ.

Now, how...how could the death of Christ on the cross provide access to you and me at this moment to the presence of God? How does the cross do that? Three elements: Number one, not a priest entering an earthly sanctuary, but a priest entering a heavenly sanctuary. Jesus

is the priest here. The priest in the Old Testament went into an earthly sanctuary, an earthly Tabernacle. Go back to 8:5, and we begin to fill in some of the blanks in the book of Hebrews here. Hebrews 8:5. Numerous times, the author of Hebrews talks about how this Tabernacle, this earthly Tabernacle was a copy, a man-made representation. Look at verse 5, *"They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'"* It's a copy; it's a representation of that which is in heaven.

Look in 9:1, *"The first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary."* Get down to verse 11. Earthly sanctuary is what they went into, but Christ, *"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation."* Get over to verse 24, listen to this: *"Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."* Don't miss it. When we talk about unlimited access to God, we're not talking about access to a room or a place or a building. We are talking about access to the very presence of God in heaven. That's where our high priest went, and that's where you and I have the privilege of dwelling in spiritual reality before the very presence of God, not an earthly sanctuary, a heavenly sanctuary.

Now, how can you and I be in the very presence of God where Christ is? Not through the blood of a spotless animal but through the blood of a sinless man. This is Hebrews 4. Hebrews 4:14-16 really parallels the Hebrews 10:19-22 that we're studying, but this picture here in Hebrews 4 is a picture of the humanity and deity of Christ. Listen to this. *"We have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."* Here's His humanity. *"We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way..."* Fully man, able to identify with us, sympathize with us, yet fully God, the Son of God who is *"just as we are - yet was without sin."* Jesus did not need to take the sacrifice of another because the sacrifice of Himself was sufficient. He was sinless.

Now, here's the picture: Hebrews 9:14 talks about an unblemished sacrifice. The picture here, don't miss this: Jesus had not sinned and, as a result, the payment for sin...remember what the payment of sin is? It's death. He did not warrant, merit that, and yet, what we see in the gospel, the blood of Christ, is Jesus taking the payment for sin, death, as a substitute sacrifice, so that when His blood is sprinkled over your heart and my heart, think about the reality, based on what we saw in Leviticus 16. Think about it as it pertains to your life. When God in His holiness looks down upon you and your sin and me and my sin, and He sees how you have broken His law, and He sees how I have broken His law, praise God, because our hearts have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. He looks down on our lives, and He does not see a broken law in you; He does not see a broken law in me. He sees the blood of Christ in you and the blood of Christ in me, and He's our righteousness, and we have access to God as a result.

The atonement cover...He has atoned for our sins with His blood. Our hearts have been sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience, and this is not a sacrifice that He has to do again next year and next month, next time we sin. It is a sacrifice that will last forever. It'll last forever. Hebrews 9:24-26,

Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. 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. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Skip over to the next chapter, Hebrews 10:11. Listen to this, *"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins..."* Listen to this, *"...he sat down at the right hand of God."* Underline, circle, and put stars everywhere around "sat down". The priest, old covenant, goes into the inmost place. He doesn't sit down and hang out for a while. He gets out as fast as he can. Jesus entered the Most Holy Place, the very throne room of God, and He pulled up a chair and sat down, and the picture here is that His work on the cross was complete. The wrath of God had been satisfied, and His reign would be eternal. He doesn't need to get up and offer anymore sacrifices because that sacrifice is once for all, and it is eternal.

Old Testament picture, New Testament fulfillment, reality, glorious reality, and the result of this New Testament reality is not a reminder of our sins; the result of this New Testament reality is the removal of all our sin. It is gone. It's gone. Your sin is gone. It's gone. Hebrews 10:17 is quoting from Jeremiah who prophesied the new covenant. He says, *"Then he adds: 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."*

Remember the picture of the scapegoat sent off into the wilderness? New Testament reality, brothers and sisters, as far as the east is from the west, the Psalmist told us; Psalm 103, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far is he removed our transgressions from us."* Isaiah 43:25, *"I, even I, blot out your transgressions for my sake and I remember your sins no more."* They are cast out and gone. He remembers them no more.

Do we realize what this means? Do we realize the gravity of this? Brothers and sisters, we are cleansed by His blood. We are cleansed by His blood, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience. Brothers and sisters, our guilt is gone. It's gone. You're not guilty anymore. It's not because God looks at your sin and just pretends like it's not there or looks the other way. Isaiah 53, *"It was the Lord's will to crush him. It pleased the Lord to crush Him and to make His life a guilt offering."* He took your guilt, all your guilt. He took your guilt. Your guilt is gone, and your conscience is clean. Your conscience is clean.

Think about that reality. We know what it's like not to have an unclean conscience. When you're a kid, and you do something wrong, disobey mom and dad, and you know you're going to get it, and you avoid their presence, and when it comes time where you know you've got to come wherever they are, and you kind of walk in the room. If you know you've done something you know dad's not going to be happy about, you don't walk in with a big smile on your face. You walk in, kind of head low and just kind of looking around. You don't want to be in his presence.

Is this not what the Adversary does? He tries to convince us, "You're not worthy enough to be in His presence. You realize what you did last night? Those thoughts that you had, what you said, how you acted? You've got to get some things cleaned up before you go into the presence of God." Blasphemy! You are clean, Christian. You're clean. Your guilt is gone. *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* No condemnation. Your guilt is gone. Your conscience is clean. Go before Him boldly; humbly, yes, and boldly, yes, with confidence...free access, unlimited access. Go into His presence with head held high based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Go there cleansed by His blood, and we are washed by His Word, having our bodies washed with pure water. Most commentators see here a reference to baptism, but even that...this is so huge. Baptism: Outward washing that reflects inward cleansing; outward manifestation of inner transformation. The picture is we're not like the priests. We don't go try to scrub our sin off, try to make ourselves clean. What happens is...and this is exactly what he quoted from Jeremiah in verse 16, "*This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.*" He puts His law in our hearts, and He changes us from the inside out. What the old covenant did not have power to do, the new covenant does.

Christ puts His law in our hearts, and not just His law, but His Spirit there; He puts His Spirit in our hearts, so that, He has made His presence our home. His dwelling place is not some room that is separated from us by a veil. His Holy Spirit dwells in you, the very presence of God dwelling in you and me.

This is so huge. We've all been in circumstances where we've felt out of place. We've all been in situations, I'm guessing, where we're looking around and thinking, "I don't think I'm supposed to be in this particular place right now, or this particular group; I don't think I'm supposed to be in this area," whatever it may be.

I've told some of you the story about a few years ago when I went to a monastery for a weekend, and I had some decisions that I was making in my life, and I really just wanted to spend some concentrated time in prayer. This monastery would allow you to come and, basically, follow the schedule of the monastery. Get up at 4:00 and go to bed at 8:00 and pray and pray and pray and read and eat and do it all in silence, just not talking. It was a really powerful weekend.

I got there late, though, and I missed the orientation during which they described the parts of the monastery you were allowed to go and the parts of the monastery you were not allowed to go into, because there were some parts that were apparently reserved only for monks, monks only. So, I was wandering around, communing with God, and I was in this building, and I opened this door, and it opened into this beautiful open air courtyard surrounded on all four sides by buildings with windows in them and in the middle, this fountain and nice bushes, and I start just kind of walking around the courtyard, and I look in one of the windows, and I see, "I think that's where the monks eat; that's kind of cool." I go to another window and look in, and I think this is where the monks study. It looked like the library and, at that point, it hit me, "I think this is one of those places that monks only," and at that very moment, on the other side of the courtyard, a door opens up and in comes a monk into the courtyard. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to get kicked out of a monastery. Who gets kicked out of a monastery?

So, I panicked, and this will sound like a joke, but it's exactly what I did. I dove into the bushes. I don't know what I was thinking, but I did. I couldn't talk to him and explain what I was doing there. So, I decided it would be better if we didn't interact, and so, I dove into the bushes, and I kind of squatted down behind. It was between this one bush and a column. I remember this like it was yesterday. It was intense. I'm just sweating profusely.

Then, I started thinking as I'm squatting down there, like, "What if he sees me? How do I explain that without talking?" This was just awkward. So, I'm sitting there, and I just started praying, like, "Lord, just blind his eyes so he doesn't see me. I know he spends a lot more time with you than I do, but this is just..." Anyway, so I'm sitting there, and I hear his footsteps. He's getting closer and closer and closer towards me, and I'm just sitting there thinking...I'll be honest, it crossed my mind, "It'd be really funny to jump out and scare the

guy." That would kind of ruin that whole vow of silence thing he's had going for years. I didn't do that. So, I just squatted there. I squatted there until he ended up...he didn't see me. He walked past me, behind me or wherever while I'm in the bush and walked out of the courtyard and, as soon as he was gone, I bolted out of the courtyard, back out the door that I had come in.

There is a tendency, and I am convinced...I'm convinced the Adversary has his way with us in this area, to convince us that we don't belong in the presence of God, that we are too dirty, and that we need to hide some things or not address some things in our lives that are too unclean, that we're not worthy enough, and I want to remind you, brothers and sisters, that you have unlimited access to God. He has invited you there on His terms, and His terms are the blood of Christ, and when His blood is on you...this is an earth-shaking truth, life-transforming truth...when His blood is on you, He does not see the guilt from what you did in the middle of the night, this morning at 2:00 AM, and He doesn't see the guilt from what you did last week or last year or ten years ago or twenty years ago that you still carry around with you. He doesn't see your guilt. He sees the blood of His Son, and He is your righteousness. So, stand boldly there, boldly there in His presence. We have access to God.

We have an advocate before God.

I'm going to give you the second truth just to make sure we get it out there. We're not going to have time to dive in: Access to God and an Advocate before God, an Advocate before God. We need to realize that Jesus didn't just go in, sit down, and now He's taking a vacation, and now, He's just sitting there watching the world. I'm convinced we, as Christians, have little to no recognition of the reality of what Christ is doing right now at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 7:23, *"There have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood."* Still a priest, still an intermediary, a go-between. Listen to verse 25, *"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."* Not only do you have access to the very throne room of God, the very presence of God, but you have an Advocate at His right hand who, right now, stands ready to give you everything you need, strength in the sins that you are struggling with, sustenance in the trials that you are walking through, confidence in the temptations that you feel like you can't overcome. He stands ready to pour out His resources on your behalf, to enable you to endure and live the victorious Christian life. You have an Advocate at this very moment. You have an Advocate in the Son of God at the right hand of God the Father.

This changes everything, because now we find that we don't need the popular, secular counseling advice, psychology that is devoid of the gospel, because in the gospel, we discover that Christ is ready to pour out the resources of His shed blood on you and every single thing you walk through, in every single difficulty you face, in every single trial you endure. Jesus is ready to pour Himself out on your behalf. He lives to intercede for you.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: Radical.net