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Blood Behind THE Veil



Library of Sermons #17

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by Joe Crews

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1 Introduction

Although the book of Hebrews has been greatly ignored by Christian scholars and laymen alike, it contains some of the most important, basic doctrines in the Bible. Spiritual subjects that are scarcely mentioned by other writers have been fully explained by the author of Hebrews.

Perhaps the reason for its general neglect is twofold. First, it leans very heavily upon Old Testament imagery and typology. Many modern Christians seem to feel that it doesn't fit in with the tone of gospel freedom enunciated in Paul's other epistles.

Secondly, the book may be shunned because it contains some very clear statements that seem to conflict with positions held by the majority of Protestant Christians. Three of those areas of controversy are woven throughout the book of Hebrews. Although at first glance they may seem to be quite unrelated to each other, these three subjects are very closely tied together. The nature of Christ's humanity, the high priestly work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, and the subject of perfection are inter-related themes of truth in the book of Hebrews.

The first two chapters are devoted in general to the position and nature of Christ before and after

His incarnation. Chapter three begins to talk about the role of Jesus as the true High Priest in contrast to the earthly ministry of human priests. That theme carries through the next ten chapters, and within those chapters the term “perfect,” or forms of it, are used nine times.

Now let us try to discover how these three major threads of doctrine—Christ’s human nature, His priesthood, and the perfection of God’s people—are really part of the same great truth.

Many scholars have puzzled over Paul’s extended explanation in chapter two of Christ’s total assumption of man’s fallen nature. He makes unequivocal statements that go far beyond any other inspired description of the incarnation. Verse 11 tells us that “he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one*: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” In other words, Christ took the same kind of body that His human brothers possessed. The Sanctifier (Christ) and the sanctified (man) are all of the same physical nature, and can truly be called brethren. The point is enlarged in the next verse, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of *flesh and blood*, he also himself likewise took part of *the same*” (Verse 14). Then comes the strongest statement of all, and one that could be made only by a person speaking under

the direct inspiration of God, “Wherefore in *all things* it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Verse 17).

Paul dares to say that it was almost an obligation for Jesus to become, through this physical birth, just like the human family whom He had come to save. Such audacity was undoubtedly rooted in his perfect assurance that he was setting forth the very thought of God.

Please notice how the foundation is being laid for the chapters that follow. Here we find the theological rationale for the high priesthood of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. He *had* to be a man in order to be “a merciful and faithful high priest.” He must of necessity pass through our experiences in order to represent us properly before the Father. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

There are some who deny that the holy nature of Jesus could ever be tempted by any of the allurements or provocations of this world. Let such be reminded that Jesus emptied Himself of His divine form when He came among men. There is no question about His perfect sinlessness, but He took upon

Himself not “the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16).

Could that nature be tempted? Of course it could. We know it because we have that nature also. We cannot and dare not probe into mysteries that are not revealed, but we can be certain of those things that are revealed. He was tempted in the same points in which we struggle against the evil one.

As a partaker of our flesh and blood, He was no stranger to the sorrows, trials, and disappointments that commonly afflict our lives. In no way did He use His divine power to evade the infirmities of human nature. Yet, He did not sin by even a thought.

Did His sinless experience separate Him so far from us that we can never hope to gain the same victory over sin? No. There are scores of assurances in the Bible that we may overcome as He overcame. We may have the “mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5), be filled with “all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), and partake of the divine nature of Christ (2 Peter 1:4).

The pure and holy aversion to sin that resided in our blessed Lord from the moment of His birth may be experienced by every converted, Spirit-filled Christian through faith in God. Jesus repeatedly

acknowledged His total dependence on the Father for everything He said and everything He did. He deliberately limited Himself to the works that were made possible by prayer, faith, and surrender—avenues that are also open to every one of us.

2 Jesus—The True High Priest

This entire plan of victory over sin was an integral part of the beautiful priestly ministry of Jesus that Paul now proceeds to describe. Because he is dealing with Jewish Christians who have trusted totally in the Old Covenant rituals of salvation, Paul chooses now to use those very well known ceremonies to establish the “new and living way” of salvation through Christ.

Patiently he reviews the familiar prescription for choosing and consecrating men to the Levitical priesthood. In quite lengthy detail, he outlines the tabernacle services in which the blood of animals was sprinkled in the holy place to make a record of sin. Even the furniture in both apartments of the earthly sanctuary is described (Hebrews 9:1–5). Paul reminds his readers that Moses had copied it from the pattern showed to him in the mount (Hebrews 8:5).

Now we come to Hebrews 9 and 10 where the sharpest parallels are drawn between the type and

the antitype. Here we can see clearly why Paul has made so much over the details of the wilderness tabernacle. Everything that was done by the priests in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary was merely a shadow pointing to what Christ would do as the true High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Said Paul, "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

Then the first ten verses of Hebrews 9 review the daily ministry carried on in the first apartment by the regular priests, and the special, awesome work of the high priest on the Day of Atonement in the most holy place.

Upon this point of the second apartment, Paul focuses special attention. "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Hebrews 9:7, 8).

Here is revealed something very important. The Holy Spirit is declared to be using the ordinances of the old sanctuary to teach something about the one

in heaven. The Spirit also witnessed that the way into the heavenly sanctuary would be opened only after the earthly had fulfilled its appointed mission.

Consider this question: Why does the writer spend so much time delineating the particular work of the priests in the two apartments of the tabernacle on earth? And why does he solemnly affirm that the Holy Spirit is teaching something special by that two-phase ministry? Because immediately Paul begins to describe the very same two-apartment work that Jesus would do in the heavenly sanctuary. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

The words "holy place" are translated from the Greek expression "ta hagia," which is a plural form meaning "holy places." Therefore, Paul is literally stating that Jesus would take His own blood and enter both apartments (holy places) of the true tabernacle in heaven to start ministering in our behalf. The same plural form is used in Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places (ta hagia) made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

3 Two Apartments in Heaven

Some have made it seem that the great original sanctuary in the heavens did not have two separated apartments as reflected in the shadow-copy made by Moses. If that is true, then Moses was disobedient to the specific commandment of God so plainly restated in Hebrews 8:5. "For, See, saith he, that thou make *all things* according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." If Moses made any addition to what was shown him in the mountain, then he could not be truly making *all things* according to the pattern.

Furthermore, Paul would have been misleading his readers by constantly affirming that Jesus was the ministering Priest in the holy places of heaven instead of just one holy place.

He spoke of Christ as "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2). The word "sanctuary" in this text is the same plural form, *ta hagia*, meaning holy places. This proves that there had to be a holy place and a most holy place in the temple above.

If the ministry of Christ did not involve a work in both apartments, why did Paul take such pains to

describe the services and furnishings of both apartments just before he made the application of them to the work of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary? No one denies that those earthly priests symbolized Christ and the two-apartment earthly tabernacle foreshadowed the heavenly sanctuary. Where there is a shadow, there must be a substance casting the shadow.

As a final proof that the heavenly sanctuary has the same separation of rooms as the earthly, read John's description of Jesus "in the midst of the seven candlesticks" (Revelation 1:13). This confirms Paul's description in Hebrews 9:2, "For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread." John saw the Son of man in the first apartment of the temple in heaven, where the candlesticks always were located.

John also described the "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne" in Revelation 4:5. Then a few verses further he beheld a "Lamb as it had been slain," "in the midst of the throne" (Revelation 5:6). Here again Jesus is located in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary where a throne is also identified. More information is added in Revelation 8:2 where an angel was seen standing at "the golden altar which was before the throne" offering incense in a golden censer. This identifies the final piece of furniture that stood in the first apartment, or holy place.

As for the most holy place in heaven, read the words of John in Revelation 11:19, “And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.” Surely, this provides the final proof that the pattern for the earthly also had two apartments. The most holy place contained the sacred ark wherein were the Ten Commandments (Hebrews 9:4).

4 Heavenly Sanctuary Needs Cleansing

Now we are confronted with one of the most amazing things about Christ’s heavenly priesthood. We are told why He would take His blood into the presence of God for us. “*It was necessary* that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these: but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:22–24).

Here we are assured that just as the earthly sanctuary needed cleansing, so the heavenly also needed cleansing or purifying. Paul makes the astounding statement that “it was ... necessary” for the patterns in the heavens to be cleansed. This

explanation of Christ ministering His own blood to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary can be understood only as we know how the sanctuary became defiled in the first place. It seems very strange indeed that there could be any defiling factor in the sinless atmosphere of heaven. But the words are there and we cannot ignore them. Something needed to be cleansed in heaven, and the blood of Jesus accomplished it as He ministered in the most holy place. We know it was done in the second apartment because of the next verse, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:25, 26).

These words declare that Christ is now fulfilling the ancient shadow that occurred every year on the Day of Atonement in Israel. That was the solemn ceremony called "the cleansing of the sanctuary." It constituted one of the most important ministries ever carried out in the tabernacle. As Paul indicates in Hebrews, it had to be done each year by the high priest. It was the only day of the year that anyone could go through that veil separating the holy place from the most holy, and only one man could do

it—the high priest. Paul declared that Jesus would not need to go through that veil every year like His earthly counterpart. But He would do it only “once in the end of the world.” He would not need the blood of animals, but His own blood, to accomplish the necessary cleansing.

5 What Caused Defilement?

In order to understand how the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries became defiled, we must go back to the significant events that led up to the Day of Atonement.

After Moses returned from the mountain where he had been shown the pattern of the holy places in heaven, he called together all the skilled artisans of Israel to build the wilderness tabernacle according to the divine blueprint. It consisted of two apartments separated by a heavy veil, approximating fifteen by forty-five feet in size. The sanctuary was surrounded by a courtyard in which the altar of burnt offering and laver were located.

In the first apartment, or holy place, was the table of shewbread, the golden candlesticks, and the altar of incense. Behind the veil was a second apartment called the most holy place, which contained only one article of furniture, the Ark of the Covenant.

On either end of the ark was a covering cherub carved out of gold, sheltering the mercy seat in the middle, which represented the very presence of God.

As the lightweight, portable tabernacle was carried through the wilderness and erected at their places of sojourn, the children of Israel would bring prescribed offerings to obtain forgiveness for their sins. Daily the transgressors would come into the courtyard, place a flawless lamb on the altar, confess their sins over it, and slay the animal with their own hand. Then, depending on the class of sinner, the priest would either sprinkle the blood in the holy place, or eat a small piece of the flesh. In either case, the priest became the sin-bearer for the people, and eventually the sin was transferred through the priest into the sanctuary where a record of the sin was made through the sprinkled blood.

The symbolism, of course, is obvious. The lamb represented Jesus. Sin meant death, and the confessed sins of the people were transferred to the innocent lamb. Then, through the blood, their sins were transferred into the tabernacle.

Because the record of sin accumulated in the sanctuary, God commanded Israel to observe a special, solemn service once a year called the Day of Atonement. At that time, the sanctuary was to be cleansed of its defilement. It was the time when

final atonement was made for the sins that had been confessed day after day during the year. In truth, it was looked upon as the Day of Judgment, and even modern Jews consider Yom Kippur as the most important day of the year. If confession had not been made by the end of that day, a person was cut off from Israel and left without hope.

No wonder, then, that the people prayed and fasted as that Day of Judgment approached every seventh month of the year. While they waited with sincere heart-searching, the high priest cast lots on two goats in the outer court. After taking a censer of fire and incense through the veil into the most holy place, he returned to take the blood of a bullock for his own sins and sprinkled it seven times before the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:14). Then he killed the goat upon which the lot fell (the Lord's goat) and sprinkled its blood in the most holy place before the mercy seat. This made atonement for the sanctuary that had been defiled, as well as for the people who had confessed their sins.

After sprinkling the blood on all the places where the day-to-day sin-laden blood had been applied, the high priest emerged from the sanctuary and put his hands on the head of the second goat, the scapegoat. Then that goat was led off into the wilderness to perish alone (Leviticus 16:20–22).

What was accomplished by this dramatic ritual service? The record states, "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (Leviticus 16:30). It is important to understand that there was a sanctifying, cleansing work done for the people as well as a blotting out of the record of their transgressions.

The symbolisms are all quite self-evident except the scapegoat. What does it represent? Please keep in mind that this ceremony depicted the final disposition of all sin that had been committed during the year. Those who confessed by bringing a lamb were now clean.

Those who had not come by the end of the day had to bear their own sins and were cut off from Israel. The scapegoat could not represent Jesus, because there is no shedding of blood on its part. Who else would have to bear any responsibility for the sins of all the people? Only one. Satan, the great originator of all sin, would finally have rolled back upon him his share of guilt in every sin he had instigated.

This is what is represented by the scapegoat. He had no part whatsoever in the atonement. The Scriptures plainly say that the high priest had *made an end* of reconciling the people. Atonement had been completed and all the confessed guilt of the

people had been blotted out. This punishment of Satan for all the sins in which he had shared a primary responsibility was not a substitutionary or atoning punishment at all, except in the sense of a murderer atoning for his sins by being executed for them.

As the man led away the scapegoat to perish miserably in the wilderness, the final eradication of all sin from the universe was vividly depicted. With the death of the wicked, both root and branches, the terminal traces of sin's awful consequences will be completely obliterated.

Thus, the Day of Atonement prefigured the disposition of sin from the universe. The ultimate lines of responsibility for all sin will be unerringly traced to the guilty parties, and someone must pay the penalty for each sin. The death of the lamb satisfies the penalty for all who have faith in the Saviour, but all others will have to bear the penalty in their own bodies. Each sinner who had not made Christ his sin-bearer will bear his own sins. Christ vicariously carried the sins of millions and died as a substitute for them, even though He never committed one sin. Satan will bear the sins of millions also, but he will die for those sins because he was personally guilty of causing them to be committed. So the two goats symbolized the only two ways for sin to be finally disposed of—atonement through the death of the

substitute sin-bearer, or punishment through the death of the sinner.

Now we are better prepared to understand what Jesus is doing right now in the heavenly sanctuary. The book of Hebrews clearly teaches that Christ is ministering His blood for us in the most holy place. Paul declared that He did not need to go in every year, but only “once in the end of the world.” Obviously, then, the same mediatorial work had to be done in the sanctuary above as transpired in the earthly tabernacle on the Day of Atonement. This establishes beyond question that the heavenly sanctuary is being cleansed by the one-time entrance of Jesus into the most holy place. This agrees perfectly with Paul’s assertion that “it was ... necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified ... but ... with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews 9:23).

We now have to answer the question as to why the heavenly sanctuary would need cleansing. In the earthly type, it was needed because of the record of sin through the sprinkled blood. That record of sin had to be removed.

Is there also a record of sin in the heavenly sanctuary? If so, how and where is that record maintained? According to the Bible, it is done by means of books. John wrote, “And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of

life: and the dead *were judged* out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Revelation 20:12).

No one can deny that there is a record of sin in heaven. It is all written down in the books, and the work of judgment takes place out of those books of sin-records. Daniel describes the judgment scene in these words, “The *judgment* was set, and the *books* were opened” (Daniel 7:10).

6 Atonement Ministered Behind the Veil

The work of Christ in the sanctuary now begins to come into focus. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is the blotting out of sin through the atoning merits of the blood which Jesus ministers in behalf of those who believe. You might ask, “How could this be? Wasn’t the atonement finished on the cross when Jesus died?” There is no question that Jesus completed the sacrifice which provided for a final atonement for every soul who would apply for cleansing and pardon. However, just as the slaying of the lamb in the courtyard did not cleanse the record of sin until it was sprinkled in the sanctuary, so the death of Jesus can effect no cleansing until it is applied to each individual life that seeks it through the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Ever since Jesus entered the most holy place through the veil, He has been engaged in the work of judgment, cleansing the record of sin by appealing His blood to the Father. The writer of Hebrews definitely ties the work of Jesus in the holy of holies to the judgment. He wrote, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this *the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:24–27).

Here the apostle Paul connects the judgment with the work of Jesus in the most holy place. That cleansing was always considered the Day of Judgment, because it dealt with the “putting away” of sin and the final disposition of it— either through the sin-bearer priest or the cutting off of the unrepentant.

Then in the next verse Paul describes the end of the judgment and the coming of Christ to deliver those who would be accounted worthy of salvation. “So

Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

Some mighty truths are revealed in this verse. Christ had completed His work as sin-bearer and priest. He is now described as appearing "without sin." This is not talking about His having a sinless nature—that has never been in question. But He is no longer bearing the sins of His people before the Father. He no longer administers His atonement for them in the heavenly sanctuary. He has finished with interceding. The work of the investigative judgment out of the books of heaven is ended. Now He returns without sin—no longer bearing people's sins—to execute the judgment that has been determined out of the books.

John speaks of that moment in these words: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:11, 12).

When Christ lays aside His priestly garment and puts on His kingly robe, the probation of every person has been eternally settled and fixed.

Every name has been accepted or rejected because of the books. A great decree goes forth from the throne declaring that all must remain as they are, and announcing the immediate return of Jesus to execute the judgments determined. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

Please note that the final determining factor will be the book of life. After the judgment takes place involving the book of life, some names will be *found* in it; others will not, because they have been blotted out in the judgment. "And another book was opened, *which is the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And whosoever was *not found* written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12, 15).

Daniel speaks of the same event in these words: "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be *found* written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:1, 2).

Again, the sequence is exactly the same. A determination has been made out of the books, and execution of the judgment follows immediately. Only those names in the book of life that survived

the searching scrutiny of the investigative judgment will be accounted worthy of eternal life.

In this brief treatment of the subject, there will be no opportunity to establish the beginning point of the cleansing work in the heavenly sanctuary. Suffice it to say here that there is one particular prophecy of Daniel that actually pinpoints the year of Christ's entry into the most holy place to begin the final atonement work for us. Since it has already begun, and we are at this very moment living in the solemn time of that judgment, it seems more appropriate to spend the rest of our time thinking of how the priestly work of Christ can benefit us right now. It is interesting to note in passing that according to the earthly shadow, the time for our High Priest to be in the most holy place would be short compared to His ministry in the first apartment.

7 Christ's Blood Makes Perfect

After contrasting the earthly priesthood with the heavenly in the first nine chapters of Hebrews, we now enter the tenth chapter where Paul explains the greatest advantage of the one over the other. All along, he has emphasized that the Old Covenant rituals of animal sacrifices could not make people stop sinning. In Hebrews 9:9 he wrote

that these things “could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the *conscience*.” In contrast, he declared that the blood of Christ, because of His spotless life, could “purge your *conscience* from dead works to serve the living God” (Verse 14).

Now chapter ten opens on the very same note. “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of things, *can never* with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually *make the comers thereunto perfect*. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year” (Hebrews 10:1–3).

Here Paul exposes the greatest weakness of the Levitical priesthood with its constant round of sin offerings. There was never an end to the process, because people were never empowered to stop sinning. Each Day of Atonement the sanctuary had to be cleansed, and there was a “remembrance again made of sins every year” (Verse 3). Had there been any true purging and perfecting of the worshiper, there would have been an end of bringing sin offerings also. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore

...” (Hebrews 10:4, 5). That word “wherefore” indicates “for this reason.”

For what reason? For the reason that sin offerings could not take sin out of people’s lives. “*Wherefore* when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me” (Verse 5).

These verses contain the most crucial message of the book of Hebrews. They assure us that Jesus came into this world because He never sinned. He would do what no animal sacrifice could accomplish. He would “take away sin” by living a perfect life of obedience in the body of flesh prepared for His entrance into the human family. His life was characterized by total submission to the will of His Father, and the psalmist defines that will to be the law of God written on the heart. By that will (obedience to the law), Christ was able to offer Himself as a perfect sin offering to the Father, thus securing sanctification for us. “Offering for sin thou wouldest not ... which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified” (Verses 8–10).

Let us ask, what is the “first” that was taken away? It was the sacrifices offered “by (or according to) the law”—the ceremonial law of shadows and

types. What is the “second” that He establishes? According to our verse, the will of God. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” What is that will? “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8). His will is the law, written in the heart. In contrast to the never-ending cycle of sinning and confessing, Jesus came to do away with sin. In His body of flesh He rendered perfect obedience to His Father, opening a way, through the veil of His flesh, for us to obtain total victory over sin also.

Paul continues, “By the which will (the law in our hearts) *we are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, *which can never take away sins: But this man*, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. ... For by one offering he hath *perfected for ever* them that are (being) sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10–14).

Here the great superiority of the New Covenant is dramatically asserted. By means of the atoning death of Jesus the law of God is written on the fleshly tables of the heart, making a perfect sanctification accessible to all. The contrast is between the continual yearly sacrifices that could never take away sin or make the worshipers perfect, and “the

offering” of the body of Jesus “once for all” which can indeed take away sin and make us perfect. “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Hebrews 7:19). That “better hope,” of course, is the atoning efficacy of the better sacrifice—the blood of Jesus. And what or whom did it make perfect? “By the which *we* draw nigh unto God.”

The clinching argument on perfection is presented in Hebrews 13:20, 21. “Now the God of peace ... through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make *you* perfect in every good work to *do his will*, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.” And what is His will? “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Some people are afraid of that word “perfect,” but Paul did not hesitate to declare the mighty power of the gospel to save to the uttermost. No one can read the book of Hebrews intelligently without hearing it repeatedly. Sometimes it is referred to as “perfecting” the believer; at other times, as “purging the conscience,” or “sanctifying” the worshiper. Some Christians reject the idea that the death of Jesus provided sanctification. They believe sanctification to be a totally different work, accomplished by the Holy Spirit following justification. However,

the writer of Hebrews certainly had no such view of righteousness by faith. He constantly connected the blood atonement to the work of sanctification. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might *sanctify* the people *with his own blood*, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). Again in Hebrews 10:10, "By the which will we are *sanctified* through the *offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" Then in Hebrews 10:29 Paul referred to "the *blood of the covenant*, wherewith he was *sanctified.*" In Hebrews 6:1 he wrote, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto *perfection*; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works."

Lest anyone should relate this doctrine of total victory over sin to some kind of "holy flesh" doctrine, we should hasten to add this footnote: all the sanctifying and perfecting available to sinful human beings is received as a gift from God and is made possible only through the life and death of Jesus. His sinless life and atoning death is *imputed* to the believer to justify him for sins committed, but His victorious life is also *imparted* to the Christian to keep him from falling into sin. The work of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary is to minister both of these glorious requirements through His mediatorial office.

With Paul, we concur that “in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). But we also agree with his words a few lines later, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the *righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3, 4).

The word “righteousness” here is the Greek work “dikaima” which means “just requirements.” Thus, the requirement of the law can be met in the believer only because Christ lived a perfect life in the same flesh. This is not referring to imputed righteousness but to the actual fulfillment of the law’s requirements. This is definitely sanctification, or imparted righteousness.

The author of Hebrews establishes the fundamental necessity of Christian perfection by the statement that if “perfection were (possible) by the Levitical priesthood ... What further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec ... ?” (Hebrews 7:11). The need existed because the old system had failed to perfect the worshipers, and if Christ had not provided for perfection, it would have been no improvement over the sacrifice of animals. It is that power of

total victory over sin which made the priesthood of Christ superior to that of Aaron. Were sanctification not included in the mediation of Jesus, it would provide exactly what the earthly shadow provided and nothing more.

We have before us now three reasons why the New Covenant can take away sin and make the “comers thereunto perfect.”

FIRST: Christ did not come with sin offerings, but with a body in which He lived a life of perfect obedience. By the example of that flesh He has consecrated for us a way of true holiness. His victory over sin in a body like ours assures that we can partake by faith of the same victory. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. ... Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Hebrews 10:19–22).

SECOND: His blood ratified the New Covenant by which the law is written on

the heart. This spiritualizes the believer, enabling Christ to live out His life of obedience within.

THIRD: Christ's unchanging priesthood makes available every moment the merits of His atoning blood for justification and sanctification. He takes away sin by cleansing the record of sin from the sanctuary through forgiveness, and by cleansing the hearts of the believers through His sanctifying presence. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Paul speaks of "boldness" and "full assurance" in following our High Priest into the holiest. Who could not come confidently when the cleansing effects are spelled out by phrases such as these: "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," "perfected forever them that are sanctified," "no more conscience of sin," "put away sin," "purge your conscience from dead works," and saved "to the uttermost"?

If the blood of Christ did not make provision for purging the conscience and perfecting the

worshiper, it would have no advantage over the ceremonial law of sacrifices. And if no people could be produced by Christ who would fulfill God's original requirement of obedience, Satan's charges against God would be true. But if it can be proved that obedience is possible through the power of God, then every sinner will finally have to acknowledge the justice of God in requiring obedience as a test of loyalty and love.

Thank God that provision has been made for the past, present, and future. The atoning merits of the once-for-all sacrifice of the true Lamb are still being extended to such as are being sanctified and will continue until our High Priest steps out from the heavenly sanctuary. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Right now, as you read these words, Jesus is pleading His blood for you. By faith, follow Him through the veil so that He can blot out your sins and deliver you from sin's power!