

## *“Atonement and Access”*

### **Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus, Our High Priest**

Hebrews 9:11-14

Dr. Jeff Stivason

November 30, 2018

**Jeff:** Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You and praise You for who You are. Indeed You are the great God. You are the only God. And You are the Creator of all things, including humanity. And Father, humanity is fallen before You, in Adam fallen. And yet in our fallenness You sought us out by Your Son,. The Lord Jesus Christ. And through Your Son the Lord Jesus You restored us. By Him, the second Adam, you gave to us what the first Adam failed to earn, and that by grace. And so, Father, as we gather before You, we thank You for Your graciousness, Your love, when we did not deserve it. Lord, we come before You now, asking that Your hand would be upon us in this study, that we might learn more about Your Son, that we might learn more about what He did on our behalf, and that we might be strengthened by it. Father, we need to learn that. We need to understand that because we are so frail and weak, and we stumble so often in word or thought or deed. And so, Father, we pray that You would continue not only to mend our lives but to mend our thinking.

And Father, as we gather before You today, we think about Jim. We think about Jim Sr. who is now accepting the help, and yet somewhat resistant. We pray, Father, for him, that You will continue to work in his life to show him his need and to create independence in him. And Father, help him to see those around him willing to help. Father, we're thankful for the help that his children are offering him, and others as well. We thank You for Jim Jr. and his service and pray for him as he makes a transition from El Salvador to Japan. We pray, Father, that Your hand would be upon him.

Father, we also pray for Clara and ask that Your hand would be upon her. We certainly pray in the upcoming surgery that You will work, and that You will work a wonder, that You'll bless her, and that this will be just a point in her life that is very much a blip in her memory. And Father, we pray that You will use it for her good and for her growth, for her benefit. Through it all we do pray for her family. We ask for Peter and for his daughter and for all those involved. We pray, Father, for Your hand to be upon them, for them to see Your goodness, Your providence moving in the midst of all this.

And Father, we pray for our brother Bruce. We're thankful for His energy. We pray that he would be blessed in his work. And we pray that You would strengthen him in his health.

Father, as we turn now to Your word, we pray that Your hand would be upon us as we study. And we ask it in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well, let's turn now to Hebrews chapter 9. And we'll start reading in verse 11 and get through verse 14.

Before I do, you know I've been thinking about this for just a little bit. And I've been thinking to myself about the letter of Hebrews as a letter and what it says. And one of the things that has struck me recently is that we're getting up and we're gathering together at

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a very early hour in order to study what one Biblical author inspired by the Spirit says is difficult teaching. And that’s what we’re in the midst of. We’re in the midst of a very difficult part of Scripture at an early hour. So thanks for coming. *(Laughter)* So we’re still not out of the weeds yet.

**Participant:** Is that all you want to say?

**Jeff:** That’s all I wanted to say. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** I was afraid that somebody would stop coming. *(Laughter)*

**Second Participant:** He was good at it, though. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I like that. *(Laughter)* All right. Let’s look at Hebrews chapter 9, verses 11-14. *“But when Christ appeared as High Priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, He entered once for all into the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

**Participant:** The word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Jeff:** All right. So today I want to walk through four points, one of them being introductory, the other two being something that we’ve worked through before. But as we encounter it in this text we’ll have something added to it. And we’ll expand on what we’ve been thinking about with regard to Christ, first of all as a High Priest. We’ve watched that unfold, for instance, in chapter 5 of Hebrews. We’ll see it unfold again here in chapter 9, but also *Christ as sacrifice*. Now we saw that the last time we were together. But here we’re going to expand on that. We’re going to see it worked out in a little bit of a fuller way here in the text. And then I want to talk to you about *the effects of Christ’s work*.

And I think that in some way I was really struck by this. It is a bit heavy. And I do appreciate your willingness to gather and to think about these kinds of things, because certainly these kinds of things that we’re thinking about and have been thinking about over the last several weeks are not three things that will make you more prosperous, or four things that will give you a better marriage, though these things will give you a better marriage and will make you more prosperous. *(Laughter)* And yet you have to work to get there.

All right. Well, let’s start with *the introduction*. And I want to start by affirming that *theology is for living*. When you think about theology, oftentimes you think about it as a dusty old discipline that needs to be brushed off, and only a certain number of people do it. And that certain amount of people who do it—well, there’s something wrong with them. But that’s not what theology is. The best theology textbooks say that theology is for living. Theology helps us not only to live. But theology helps us to do something else.

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I love “Calvin and Hobbes.” This is one of the more sobering “Calvin and Hobbes,” not so funny. Calvin says, “I don’t understand this business about death. If we’re just going to die, what’s the point of living?”

**Participant:** Good point.

**Jeff:** It is. But theology answers that question. Theology is not only for living, but theology is for dying. In other words, we live in such a way so as to prepare ourselves for death.

Now the ultimate preparing for death and for life comes from God Himself, because we’re certainly monergistic, aren’t we, Bill? *(Laughter)* We believe that God—No, no! Lay that microphone on the table! *(Laughter)* I acknowledge that! *(Laughter)*

**Bill:** We certainly are. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** We believe that we were dead in our sins and that God made us alive in His Son. He is the One who resurrected us. He is the One who gave us life in this life, in the present. And He is the One who gives us life eternal. And so He is the One who prepares us for life and death. But we have to do the living, and that’s where the synergism enters into it. *(Laughter)* You know I had to get it in there. *(Laughter)* But theology is for life.

Now when you think about theology, you have a tendency to think about that which is abstract, and yet it’s not abstract. And yet a text like the one that we’re looking at can feel somewhat abstract. And yet I want to affirm that what we’re thinking about here in this particular text is very, very practical.

Now how do I get to that point? Well, I get to that point through the Scriptures, the Scripture that we looked at the last time we were together. The tabernacle contains a lesson for us. And that lesson that we learned the last time was a profound lesson. In fact, it was one of those things that’s so basic to life that we need to learn that lesson and understand how it was that God answered that question in that lesson.

And I put it up here for you the last time and the pointer doesn’t work. But remember what I said to you. I said that in the Outer Court everybody could gather. Everybody could watch the sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering, morning and evening and for things in between. But then you would go into the Holy Place. And when you would go into the Holy Place only the Levitical priests could go into the Holy Place. And they would offer the incense on the altar of incense. They would change the showbread, and so on.

But you notice the way this is set up. There’s an altar of burnt offering that keeps you from the Holy Place. And then there’s the altar of incense that keeps you from the next place, and that’s the Most Holy Place, where the ark is, and the mercy seat which is on top of the ark. And into that place only one person, the High Priest, could go once per year.

And so what you begin to understand is that this is what the Holy Spirit told us in the text that we looked at the last time. And that is that access to God is increasingly restrictive in this system. Under the Old Testament access to God narrows.

Now what we learned the last time is foundational for an understanding of the priesthood of all believers. You know, not too long ago I was just reading. A friend of

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mine gave me a book and said, “Would you read this booklet and help me to understand it? I have a brother who gave this to me. And he’s telling me that I ought to believe this.”

So I read the booklet. I’m not going to tell you who the booklet was by or what it was about. But in this booklet it said that the priesthood of believers says that we don’t need pastors. That wasn’t the argument of the whole booklet; that was ancillary to it. But we don’t need pastors because of the priesthood of all believers.

And I said to my friend, “That’s not what the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers means. That’s not why we read about it in 1 Peter chapter 2. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers simply indicates that you don’t need a priest, a mediator, other than Jesus Christ to have access to the Most Holy Place. But the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not negate ecclesiology.

In other words, God doesn’t say, “I’m going to set up the priesthood of all believers. And by the way, I’m going to set up ecclesiology with pastors and elders and all of that just for those who want to be involved in it. But if you don’t want to be involved in it, you don’t have to be, because you’re a priest.” That’s not the idea.

So what we’re talking about is something that’s imminently practical. Why? Because it involves whether or not you have access to the living God. It doesn’t answer the question do I need a pastor or not? For that you need to go to 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and so on, right? It doesn’t answer the question do I need elders? You have to go to Titus for that. Yes, you need these things. These are the things that are a part of the visible church that God has established.

But here we’re talking about access to God. And so the exegesis of the text, the reading of the text that we’re thinking about, is practical because it asks the question. Do you have access to God?

This is what the Holy Spirit indicates. When I say that the Holy Spirit indicated this, I didn’t mean that He told me and He whispered it in my ear. He told us in Hebrews chapter 9 verse 8. By this, by this example of the temple and the tabernacle *“the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the Holy Places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing.”* In other words, as long as this first covenant still stands and there is no fulfillment, then access to God is limited. And yet what he is saying is, that fulfillment has arrived, and access to God is ours. And that’s why he starts here: *“But when Christ appeared.”*

So we’re in the midst of an argument. We’re in the midst of an unfolding argument that we have to remember, something of the past in order to bring it into the present. And that is what we need to remember.

So now we need to move to *Christ as our High Priest*. Let’s think about this for a minute—Christ as our High Priest.

There are some basic things that I want you to catch from this text. But I also want you to remember. First of all, I want you to remember that there is a distinction that needs to be made. And that distinction that needs to be made has to do with the priesthood of Christ.

If you look in chapter 8 verse 4, look at what it says, 8:4. *“Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all.”* This is talking about Christ. *“If He were on earth, He*

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*would not be a priest at all.*” That’s chapter 8. But in chapter 5, don’t you remember that in chapter 5 we were told that He is a High Priest? In fact, He is the High Priest.

So now what are we dealing with here? Are we dealing with a contradiction in the Scriptures? Absolutely not. What are we dealing with? The author of Hebrews has made us aware of what he’s talking about when he makes this distinction. He says, “If He were on earth, He would not be a priest.” And He could not be a priest? Why could He not be a priest? Because He was not of the tribe of Levi.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** But He is a Priest—chapter 5—because He is a Priest in the order of who?

**Participant:** Melchizedek.

**Jeff:** Yes. Very good. It’s a distinction and you already understand it. In fact, I just want to throw this up- there. Mark chapter 12. This is when Jesus explains Himself to the Pharisees. And he quotes Psalm 110. And what He says is this. He says, “I understand Myself as the One of whom it is spoken in this text, that I am the Son of David, the One who is in the order of the priesthood of Melchizedek.” That’s Jesus’ self-understanding.

The second is this. The second is that *with the change of the priesthood there comes a change in the law.* And we already saw this back in 7:12.

Now think about what that means for a minute. When we thought about it in chapter 7, we said to ourselves, “What does he mean by ‘a change in the law?’” One of the things that we understood by that was that the law was not capable of saving anyone. The law could only point toward its fulfillment. But the law could not save. It was good for what it was meant to do, but not good beyond that.

And remember what we said. We said that when the people of Israel were given the law and given the sacrifices, that those two things worked in tandem. For instance, the people of Israel were supposed to read the law and be convicted of their sins. And then they were to see the sacrifices. And they were to go and offer a sacrifice and find forgiveness in the type to which that type pointed, which is Christ.

Now think about it for just a minute. What did they do instead? They basically said, “We got this. We can keep this law.” And so what they did was they created loopholes in the law.

I don’t remember now if I did this. Do you remember me talking about the habitations? The Jews said this. Well, look. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath? Well, it means not to travel. How far can I not travel on the Sabbath? Well, let’s say two miles. I can’t travel more than two miles on the Sabbath. If I travel more than two miles on the Sabbath, I’ve broken the Sabbath.

Okay. When the Sabbath comes I need to go four miles. So how am I going to do four miles? Well, let’s think about that.

**Participant:** You go two miles the night before.

**Jeff:** No! You go two miles, and then if I go two miles, what do I have to do? I have to ask myself, “Well, what’s in two miles?”, so that I can go two more miles. Well, it’s a habitation. In other words, it’s a dwelling place.

What would constitute a dwelling place? Well, a dwelling place is when you have so much food in your house. So what I’ll do is, I’ll go two miles and I’ll put some food at

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the two-mile marker so that when tomorrow comes, which is the Sabbath, I can go the two miles and I’ve not left home. And then I can go two more miles, and I still haven’t left home! Or I still haven’t broken the Sabbath, that is, because I’ve worked my way around it.

Now I don’t know if you realize this or not, but today the Jews still practice that law of habitation. And today this is binding. Today I think the number is up to as long as that if more than 600,000 people can’t inhabit that habitation, it’s considered a habitation. But there are these habitations that are marked out all over the place where you can go on the Sabbath, and not be breaking the Sabbath by traveling on the Sabbath.

Now when you have that mindset, let me just say this to you. When you have that mindset, you never break the law! And if you never break the law, in your own mind,--

**Participant:** You don’t need a priest.

**Jeff:** You don’t need a sacrifice. And you see, that’s the whole problem that the Jews face. Yes, please?

**Participant:** But the Jews did not do a sacrifice after the destruction of the temple.

**Jeff:** Well, here’s the interesting thing.

**Participant:** So they had to come up with these laws.

**Jeff:** Yes, but they had to come up with these laws when they went into exile under Assyria in 722 and then in 586.

**Participant:** The very laws you’re talking about, the intricacy and the involvement of it?

**Jeff:** They developed in the Exilic period.

**Participant:** When there was no more place to have a sacrifice.

**Jeff:** Yes. So those laws that were developed under the exile continued to be developed into the first and second centuries, post the destruction of the temple.

**Participant:** You know, there was an incident. I don’t know if some of you read about it. There was an airline recently, within the last several weeks, where there were Hasidic Jews on an airplane flight. And because the flight left late, they were going to be traveling into the Sabbath the day when they landed. And they insisted that the flight land.

**Jeff:** Really?

**Participant:** Yes. And it was on two different flights. One of the flights landed and the other one just kept going. But it raised a real ruckus on the flight in midair.

**Jeff:** Wow!

**Participant:** I mean, we make fun of that. But if your eternal destiny depends on your performance, you better make a big deal about it. So it’s not a silly thing at all.

**Jeff:** Yes. No, it’s not, absolutely not. Well, when we—Anybody else? This is good.

**Participant:** I had a question earlier that I didn’t understand. I mean, I know you talked about Melchizedek. But why a change in the law, then? The Levitical priesthood wasn’t sufficient in some way, but Melchizedek’s—

**Jeff:** Well, the whole point about the Levitical priesthood was that it was meant to be a pointer toward its fulfillment. The fulfillment is Jesus Christ who is of a different order of priesthood. Remember that we talked about this when we looked at this earlier. And so remember what we said. Types don’t have to be exact replications of themselves and that

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sort of thing, right? So with Jesus there is a fulfillment of all that went before Him. But what went before Him was more than the Levitical priesthood.

So with the change in the priesthood comes a change in the law. Now let me simply say this. And I’m just going to say this rather briefly, so if you have a question about it you can feel free to ask. But the law that was meant to drive people to Christ in the Old Testament meant to drive them to Christ, that is, in the sacrifices that they were given, to see Him through them, is meant to do the same thing today. The law is not revoked. The law is meant to drive people to Christ today, the same thing. The law is meant to be a guide to people today who are in the faith, just as it was back then. So the law in that sense doesn’t change.

What changes is this. What changes is that part of the law which is of the ceremonial aspect of the law, that part that entails the temple and the incense and the sacrifices and the priesthood, those kinds of things, those were types that were now fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And so when we talk about a change in the law at this point, what we’re talking about is the fulfillment of those things. And when the fulfillment comes, the types are no longer needed. The antitype has come. The fulfillment has come and those old things pass away—no longer sacrifices, no longer incense, no longer those sorts of things.

Therefore, let me just put it like this. When you get into the New Testament, what you have is, you have a worship that is without all of the accoutrements of the Old Testament. And what were those? They were vestments and they were sacrifices and they were incense, and they were all these sorts of things. And so here are these people sitting in a house without all of those things. And they’re tempted to go back to those things.

And this is part of the point that the writer is making. Just because you can see and taste and touch the things of the Old, don’t go back to them, because they’re not more real. And so there’s a change in the law. Yes?

**Participant:** When you got through that list, it sort of makes me think about what the church started to do in the Middle Ages—putting on the vestments, doing the incense.

**Jeff:** Well, even before that John Chrysostom in the fifth century, in the 400s, when he was preaching, talked about the Judaizing of the church, because there were churches even in those days pulling things up from Judaism. I mean, let’s face it. What is the Roman Catholic Church? Let’s face it. The Roman Catholic Church is a Judaizing of the church. You have everything from the Old Testament now imported into the New. I say everything. But you have many things from the Old imported into the New Testament church.

**Participant:** Wouldn’t that be true of the Anglican Church as well?

**Jeff:** Well, it came from the Catholic—(*Loud groans and sighs*)

**Jeff:** I’m not going to answer that, (*laughter*), because I’ve got Anglican brothers here who can defend themselves. (*Applause*)

**Participant:** Read my book. (*Laughter*)

**Second Participant:** Good point.

**Third Participant:** *The Essentials*, the one in the library back there, right?

**Fourth Participant:** That’s if the Lord saves it.

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**Fifth Participant:** Doesn't the Bible show us the distinction between certain parts of the law? But it doesn't refer to the law etched in stone, which is the Commandments. There's our schoolteacher. The other, the ceremonial law, is the foreshadowing of Christ as our Priest of the things that will be coming for us.

**Jeff:** I see the threefold division of the law. The threefold division of the law is the moral law, the ceremonial law and the civil law. But when I look at that threefold division, here's the way I see it. I look at the Ten commandments. And I look at the ceremonial law as an application of the law for that particular period.

So in other words, how is it that we love the Lord our God in the Old Testament? Well, this is how we do it, through priests and sacrificial systems and all of this sort of thing. And that changes with the New.

**Participant:** Right.

**Jeff:** And the question about the civil aspect of the law in the Old Testament economy of Israel was—I'm dividing this neatly, but it doesn't divide neatly,—but how do I love my brother? Well, these are the laws that govern how you love your brother. But they fall out of the Ten Commandments. So the threefold division is there. But the moral law is the priority, and the other two aspects fall out of that. That's how I view that. Yes?

**Participant:** I'm not absolutely certain, but I think that the earliest church argued that here we have no altar because we have an altar in heaven.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** And that was about the time of Cyprian. What were his dates?

**Jeff:** He was in the 200s.

**Participant:** Somewhere he began to reverse it and say, *“here we have a superior priesthood and a superior altar.”* And that's from none except in Christ, to now we have a better one. And that's where you begin to get all the additions of the stuff that you were talking about.

**Jeff:** Yes. I mean, it's from him that you get the great phrase, *“Outside of the church there is no salvation”*, which is true.

**Participant:** It's true.

**Jeff:** But it begins to take on a different—

**Participant:** No bishop, no church.

**Jeff:** That's right.

**Participant:** So Cyprian had something right. I hope he did! *(Laughter)*

**Second Participant:** So what you're saying is that Cyprian brought it back down to earth, and so we should—

**Transcriber's Note:** Jeff points to the microphone.

**Jeff:** This is broken, I think. *(Laughter and applause)*

**Participant:** If you guys understand this, don't ask any questions! That's all right! *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** You caused that trouble by asking that question. *(Laughter)* Hey, go sit down over there. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** But what—

**Jeff:** All right. *(Laughter)*



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**Participant:** No soup for you! (*Laughter*)

**Jeff:** So the law makes nothing perfect. Fulfillment is needed in Jesus Christ.

The third really goes along with that. And that is that *the shadows and the types can only do so much*. Now let me put it like this. Think about it like this. When our text says that the blood of a heifer can cleanse the flesh, what is he talking about? Well, think about it like this. You have the Day of Atonement and the blood of a red heifer. The ashes are kept, and now you have this family. And the family loses a son. And they go outside the gate and they bury the son, and they’re defiled now. They’re defiled because they’ve come into contact with a dead body.

Now this is a family in mourning. So what do they do? They go to the priest. And the priest puts the ashes in water and mixes it up and then sprinkles them with the water, and they’re cleansed. Instead of having to spend the night outside of the camp in their mourning and grieving over their son, now they can come in and go to their own home. And so in that sense our text is talking about that sort of cleansing of the flesh.

And the point is that if the ashes of an animal can cleanse the flesh, then how much more is the blood of Christ able to cleanse not the flesh, but the conscience? And that’s the point. You see, the point that he’s driving at is this. All of the types were trying to help us to understand that there was a greater cleansing required, and we all knew it. And that greater cleansing that was required was not just a cleansing of the whole self, but the cleansing of the whole self that includes the conscience that plagues me because of my sins. And that’s what he’s really driving at here in this text. And so when you think about what he’s saying in terms of the animals being able to cleanse the flesh, that’s an example of what he means.

Here’s the question I have for you. One of the things I want to talk to you about is this, and I know I’ve mentioned this to you before at some point. But when you think about the Old Testament imagery, it is so vast in terms of the explanation of sin! All you have to do is turn to the book of Leviticus. And you find that the priest is really a medical doctor. He’s supposed to go and he’s supposed to examine sores and he’s supposed to examine scabs. And he’s supposed to determine whether or not they’re healing or not healing, and whether or not they’re clean or unclean now, and whether you’re allowed back in the camp or you have to remain outside of the camp, and that sort of thing, all of that stuff.

Well, all of that stuff is the case, because the Bible is teaching us about sin. It’s teaching us about the proliferation of sin and the depth of sin. It’s teaching us about our separation from God. But it’s also teaching us about what was required of Christ at His coming in order to atone for sin. So you not only have all that stuff about scabs and sores and all that stuff, but you also have a number of different offerings—the burnt offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the fellowship offering, all of those different offerings and all of their different requirements. Why? Because no one offering can gather up all that Christ did for us in it. So there needed to be all of this teaching about sin and all of this teaching about sacrifice, so that we could understand the many different aspects of it that are gathered in Christ.

So having said that, what was the climactic point of the offering in the Old Testament? It was when the blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and poured out on the altar. Now

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when you look at our text, one of the things that you notice is this. You notice, for instance, that our text tells us *“when Christ appeared as High Priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, He entered once for all into the Holy Places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”*

In other words, here we have this picture of Christ gathering up all of these strands of Old Testament theology that pointed toward His work. And what the author of The Hebrews is trying to help us see is that very thing. He’s fulfilling all these things. He not only had the cup of God’s wrath upon the cross, but in His death He is now pictured as entering the Holy of Holies, pouring out the blood on the altar, the heavenly altar. He’s pictured as going into the tent, the Most Holy Place, and so on. All of these images are being gathered up, and our minds are sparking with one fire after another, remembering all of this Old Testament imagery. And that’s what’s happening here.

The question is what would you have? Would you have the things of the Old Testament which couldn’t do more than cleanse your flesh and allow you back into camp? Or would you have your conscience cleansed? Now that’s really the big question, isn’t it, because I think that as we sit here and as we think about this, we think this to ourselves. You know, the cleansing of the conscience is a vital thing. And it’s vital because every one of us struggles with sin. And every one of us struggles because of the guilt that we feel regarding the sin that we’ve committed, either in our distant past or our most recent past, or both.

And so when we read something like this, I think some of us have a tendency to say something like this. “You know, this is just words, because I’m not really sure that I actually experience what this text is saying. This text is telling me that the sacrifice of Christ cleanses my conscience, and I haven’t felt that yet. I still feel as guilty today as I did the day I came to Christ. I felt a little more excited then. But I don’t feel the cleansing of my conscience. I still feel plagued in it.”

Now last time I said to you that one of the reasons why we don’t feel or have a sense of the cleansing of the conscience is because oftentimes we don’t think of the gospel the way we ought to think about the gospel. In other words, we think about a truncated gospel, and we think about an abbreviated gospel.

For instance, sometimes we have the tendency to think that the gospel is just that I was forgiven of my sins. And if that’s the case, think about what that does to you. If I’m just forgiven of my sins, that feels like it puts me in a state of neutrality, right? But the full gospel is that I’ve been forgiven my sins, and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to me. And now before God I stand righteous.

Now if you think like that, that’s a full-orbed gospel. And when Paul says that you need to reckon these things, what he is saying to me is this. I need to think rightly about myself before God in Christ. And that is not the picture of a guy who has just had his sins erased and is now back in a state of neutrality, collecting his sins before God so he can feel guilty before Him. No! Now I am a guy who has had my sins erased, and I’ve had the righteousness of Christ imputed to my account, reckoned to me. And I need to get that

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straight in my thinking. And if I get that straight in my thinking every time I stand before God, I don't stand before God thinking of Him as a Father who is about ready to trounce me if He gets me close enough to Him. I think about myself as a son who possesses the same righteousness that Christ possesses because I am bound to that Christ by faith.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And if I am bound to Him by faith and possess that righteousness that He possesses, then how can I not be thought of as His son? And that's the kind of thing that I need to tell myself repeatedly.

You see, when Luther said that we need to preach the gospel to ourselves, that's what he means. But if we only have a truncated gospel, we're never going to preach the gospel to ourselves that's going to do that for us.

So the last time we were together I said to you that it's vitally important that we think about what the gospel is. Yes?

**Participant:** It's a matter of what we know, not what we feel.

**Jeff:** It is. It is a matter of what we know, not what we feel. But here's the thing I would say to you. Your feelings cannot be negated. Tom, I'm not saying that you're saying that.

Here's the way I thought for a long, long time. I used to think this. I used to think that feelings are bad. You need to compartmentalize those. Get rid of them; you need to put them down. It's what I think.

And so did you ever meet those people? You say, "I have this feeling."

And they say, "Oh, do you have the feeling or do you have the thinking?" You know? You kind of feel like "I just said, 'Feel!' They don't think that I think." (*Laughter*)

Don't be like that! We do put a lot of emphasis on feeling today, probably more of an emphasis on feeling than we ought to have. But listen! I'm telling you know what I think, but I'm excited about it! Do you see what I mean? I can't divorce or separate. I can distinguish between my thinking and my feelings. But I can't do anything without feeling.

**Transcriber's Note:** Jeff speaks almost in a monotone.

**Jeff:** If I talk to you like this, I'm certainly talking to you with feeling. It may be a subdued feeling, but I'm still talking to you with feeling. (*Laughter*) Right? (*Laughter*) Do you see what I mean? We have to be careful about that sort of thing. I know, Tom, that you're not saying that we're not.

So, *Christ is sacrificed*. The argument from the lesser to the greater is what we have here. What is the argument from the lesser to the greater? Well, it's an *a posteriori* argument. But this helps us to understand an *a posteriori* argument. Mikey likes it. Everybody will like it. (*Laughter*)

**Transcriber's Note:** Referring to a TV Life cereal commercial from the '70s.

**Jeff:** That's an argument from the lesser to the greater. If Mikey who is lesser likes it, then certainly everybody will like it, and that's the greater. That's the argument that's going on here.

If you were able to be cleansed in the flesh by the ashes of a heifer, then how much more will the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience? That's the argument. That's the

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argument from the lesser to the greater that we’re dealing with in this text. If the sacrifices could make clean, then how much more will the blood of Christ cleanse the conscience?

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Now what makes the sacrifice of Christ greater? Well, two things. First of all, *the Offerer Himself*. He is without spot or blemish.

Now why is this important for us? Well, I’ll tell you why it’s important. Because if I’m going to think rightly about the gospel, that part of which people sometimes forget, that is that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to my account, then this is of primary importance. Why? Because if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to me, then this is what we’re talking about. We’re talking about Him being a sacrifice without spot or blemish. In other words, we’re talking about His righteous character. And that righteous character becomes important to me as it’s imputed to me.

Now some theology. We have to ask ourselves a question. We have to ask ourselves how was it that Christ withstood temptation? How was it that He became without spot or blemish?

Now I know that I’ve talked to you about this before. But I think it’s been over a year ago. When we think about Christology, people say, “Oh, now you’re thinking about Christology. Now you’re getting abstract.” No. Actually when you think about Christology, you’re being very practical. Let me tell you what I mean.

Here’s what some people think. When you ask this question, how did Christ withstand temptation?, they’ll say this to you. This is what they really mean. They may not put it in these words. But what they really mean is this. They mean that Christ had a divine nature and Christ had a human nature. And Christ withstood temptation because He was God. And what they’re really saying is this. They’re saying that the divine and the human nature penetrated one another. And the divine nature caused the human nature to withstand temptation.

Now that would be great if it weren’t a heresy. (*Laughter*) It’s called *Monophysitism*.

**Participant:** Eutychianism.

**Jeff:** Eutychianism, monophysitism. When the two penetrate, what you violate is the Council of Chalcedon in 451 which said that the proper way to understand the two natures of Christ, human and divine, is to understand that in the one Person, Jesus, those two natures cannot be pulled apart, nor do they penetrate one another.

Now the question is, if those two natures do not penetrate,-- You know, I love our brother Martin Luther. But this was Martin Luther’s problem. Martin Luther said, “How did Jesus do that? Well, poof! The divine penetrated.”

And then they said, “Well, what do you do with the fact that Christ didn’t know the day of His own return?”

He goes, “Kenosis! Boom!” The divine evacuates the human at that point, and He doesn’t know in His human nature.

And you go, “Well, okay.” But I want you to understand something. During the Reformation, Calvin accused Luther of being a eutychian. But Luther accused Calvin of being a Nestorian.

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**Transcriber’s Note:** The heresy that Christ was two Persons, not one Person with two natures.

**Jeff:** Which was not true. *(Laughter)* Anyway, jokes are kind of hard these days.  
*(Laughter)*

All right. So how did Christ withstand temptation?

**Participant:** Perfectly. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** He did! Christ is impeccable. But how did He do it? He did it because the Holy Spirit took from the divine and bestowed upon the human nature in the Person of Christ.

Now let me give you a quote.

**Participant:** That sounds very much like Monophysitism, what you just said.

**Second Participant:** No, the third Person.

**First Participant:** Oh, the third Person. Okay.

**Jeff:** Yes. It’s not the Son, Ted. *(Laughter)* George Smeaton wrote in his book on the Holy Spirit. *“The Holy Ghost, filling the Lord’s humanity with unspeakable compassion,”*—filling the Lord’s humanity, Ted.

**Ted:** I got that. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** *“With unspeakable compassion, ardent zeal, fortitude, energy and fervent love, impelled Him forward on His atoning work, and never suffered His mind to cool until the sacrifice was accomplished.”*

I like that, because the things that are mentioned are the graces, the gifts of the divine nature that are bestowed upon the human nature in the Person of Christ, empowering Him to do what He was called to do, to offer Himself as a sacrifice.

Here’s where it gets very practical. Where it gets very practical is this. The same Spirit who took from the divine nature and bestowed upon the human in the Person of Christ is the same Holy Spirit who indwells us and empowers us,—

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And helps us along by taking the riches of Christ and bestowing them upon us.

And so how we think about Christology really matters. If we think about Christ as One who withstood temptation because His divine nature interpenetrated with His human nature, well then he becomes something totally apart from me. Now He is totally apart from me. But the way He withstood temptation was dependence on the Holy Spirit.

So if that’s the case, then that really becomes a model for me, as 1 Peter says. Christ is an example for me, not just in His sacrificial death, but in the way He withstood temptation. Go ahead.

**Participant:** That would be an example for us. It seems to me that one difference is that He didn’t have a fallen nature. We do.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Participant:** We do have the Holy Spirit’s help. We do in the situation of sinning, in which we have a fallen nature.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. Yes, go ahead.

**Participant:** Can I ask a question?

**Jeff:** No. *(Laughter)* Yes. Sure, you can.

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**Second Participant:** And yet the Scripture teaches us that *“if we walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.”* So when we sin, it’s probably a pretty good testimony that we’re not walking by the Spirit.

**Jeff:** Yes. In that passage there’s a crucial distinction being made between the pattern of the flesh or the habit, and the incidents. So here’s what I would say to you. Here is what I would say is a crucial distinction that you can find in that text. And that is that if your life consists of incidents of sinfulness versus a pattern of sinfulness, then there’s hope, right? If your life is a pattern, a regular recycling pattern of the same sins over and over again, you have a problem.

And I’ll tell on myself. I’ll give you an example. How many times when you have a young man in your house, he gets under your skin, and you’re like, “Hey! Don’t do that!” And then you go to him and you’re like, “Hey, son, I’m really sorry about the way I handled that. You know, that’s why I need a Savior, too.”

And then, you know, the next week. “Hey! Don’t do that!” (*Laughter*) And then you go, “Okay, son. That’s why Dad needs a Savior, too.” The third week, “Hey!” And then you’re like “Hey.”

And I’ll never forget the realization that I had. My son is not going to think that the gospel actually works, because there is forgiveness in the gospel. But the gospel has a transformative power too.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And I can’t use it as an excuse.

**Participant:** That’s right.

**Jeff:** And I thought to myself at that moment, *“I’ve got a pattern going on that I need to mortify.”*

**Participant:** As believers, though, doesn’t that truth apply that if you walk by the Spirit, we’re called to be filled with the Spirit?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** Continually filled, ongoing. And if we’re being filled with the Spirit, we’re not about to carry out the desires of the flesh.

**Jeff:** Yes. We’ll have incidents where the flesh comes out. But here’s what’s really interesting. What’s really interesting, what most people don’t get,—and I’m bringing this in; I’m not saying that it’s part of our conversation,—what most people don’t get is that in the Old Testament the sacrificial system was meant for unintentional sins. The high-handed rebellious sins that you were to be forgiven for came once a year on the Day of Atonement. But the sacrificial system was for non-intentional sinners, like you’re talking about, okay?

So in the New Testament, if we understand the sacrificial system, we understand that the Old Testament believer was to be a conscientious believer who was being transformed under the gospel, who needed to depend on sacrifices, not for big, huge, rebellious sins but for everyday sins of thought, word and deed—incidents of sin, you know. And the whole point is that we have a tendency to think the opposite, that the sacrificial system they offered every day was for high-handed rebellious sins.

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Now think about that. If what I’ve said is correct, then there was an expectation that even the gospel of the Old Testament was transformative, right? It’s just exactly what you’re saying.

**Participant:** I’m not quite getting this. What about those high-handed sins that we commit at times, because not all my sins are incidental or—

**Jeff:** Well, the great thing about the high-handed sins is—so, for instance, let’s say that on January 1 somebody commits adultery on his wife. And let’s say that the Day of Atonement comes later in the year. You know that the whole point is that this is a high-handed rebellious sin that you will remember on the Day of Atonement. And you’ll remember it the year after that, and the year after that. But in Christ, remember what we said. Everything is gathered up—unintentional sins, the Day of Atonement,—all of these things are gathered up into Christ, right? So now I wake up and I say, “I hate winter,” or whatever. I talk negatively about the providence of God, right? Or whatever you do, even a high-handed sin. I go to Christ and I find forgiveness in Him, not just on one day a year. But I go to Him and I know that in Christ, when I repent, that sin is providentially forgotten by the Father, right? So in Christ I find the fulfillment of all of this, which was only sort of laid out for me in sort of progressive fulfillment earlier.

**Participant:** You were talking about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** And there’s the human side and the divine side.

**Jeff:** Say that again.

**Second Participant:** That’s a heresy.

**First Participant:** Okay. Well, my point with that verse, that if you walk by the Spirit, I was thinking about your explanation of how Christ was empowered by the Holy Spirit as Man, who fulfilled the requirements of the law in all righteousness. And isn’t that what that verse is speaking of, too, that if we walk by the Spirit we will also through the power of the Spirit be fulfilling our new nature that Christ has—

**Jeff:** Yes, of course. Well, let’s pray. Oh, yes?

**Participant:** That’s why I was trying to make the statement earlier that there is a difference in the fact that He did not have a fallen nature and we do. I mean, that is just a reality. And there are branches of the church, the sanctified church, that sort of say that once they are sanctified that they can no longer and do no longer sin, which is just unreality.

**Jeff:** Yes, right. It’s not reality. Well, I did have a guy one time, years and years ago, in my first pastorate in the community church. And there was a guy that was sitting in the Bible study. And he told me and he said, “I’ve not committed sins since the day I was converted.”

And I said, “Well, how long have you been converted? Since this afternoon, *or what?*”  
(*Laughter*)

And he said, “For years and years and years.”

And I said, “Are you claiming perfection?”

And he said, “I am.” And his wife is sitting there going,— (*Laughter*)

**Transcriber’s Note:** An incredulous look.

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**Jeff:** Well, let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given. Lord, bless Your word to us. Help us to understand that the cleansing of the conscience is there for us, and it’s when we reflect upon the gospel in its fullness, and we reckon it to ourselves with the power of the Spirit in us. Father, thank You for that. And we trust You for it. And we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen. (*Applause*)