

“The Promise of Forgiveness”

Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 9:15-22

Dr. Jeff Stivason

December 7, 2018

Transcriber’s Note: The men sing:

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels!
O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him!
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Jeff: Thanks, Don. Let’s pray together. Father in heaven, we are thankful for this day and for the time You’ve given. We’re thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ most of all, for He is an expression of Your love to us, Lord, when we were yet undeserving sinners. We thank You for how You have revealed Yourself, and the power and the might that underlies it all. We thank You that You are a beautiful God, and therefore the love that You extended to us in Jesus Christ is as unchangeable as You are. We thank You, Father, that You are indeed great and greatly to be praised and that You are independent, that You do not need us. And yet You created us and loved us when we were yet fallen. Father, we thank You for the love that was expressed in the Lord Jesus. Thank You that He came clothed in the gospel that we might be clothed in His righteousness.

Father, as we gather before You this morning, we are mindful of the riches that are in Him. And as we enter into this time of the year, this season of the year, we’re mindful of the Incarnation, of His coming in the likeness of human flesh, and yet He Himself was impeccable. We’re thankful for that. And we’re praising You because of Him, because He was the sinless sacrifice and the sinless Priest who accomplished our redemption.

Father, as we gather, we’re also mindful of the things that are heavy upon our hearts. And we think of Clara and ask that Your hand would be upon her as the days approach for her surgery. We ask that You will go before her and the family, and that You will indeed minister by bringing about health and healing and wellness. Father, we also pray for Grant. Our hearts are heavy to hear about this situation that He is experiencing. And it’s our desire and prayer that You’ll give the doctors wisdom as they work. Father, we pray that You’ll enable them to discover the problem and correct it. And Father, we pray not only for the preservation of his life but for his quick healing. And Father, we ask that You’ll minister as well to Donna in the closing years of her life. Bless her and strengthen her by Your grace.

Father, as we give ourselves to the study of Your word, we pray that You’ll bless us and strengthen us. And we pray that You’ll do this for Christ’s sake. It’s in His name that we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, why don’t we turn to Hebrews chapter 9. We’ll look at verses 15-22 today. And Don, do you have that?

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Don: Yes, I do.

Jeff: Why don't you read that loudly? You might have somebody approaching you with a microphone here in a second.

Don: Okay, but do you know what? I didn't write the verse numbers. I have it till 28. Where does verse 22 end?

Jeff: So we want 15-22. And 22 ends with the phrase *“the forgiveness of sins.”*

Don: Thank you. *“Therefore He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may—*“ Oh boy, I can't read my own writing! *(Laughter)*

Transcriber's Note: Don is reading Braille.

Don: *“May receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not enforced as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, the water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. Thanks, Don. All right. If I wander over here, can you still hear me in the back? I'm going to try and stay in front of the microphone, but I might wander just a little bit. All right.

Participant: We all do, Jeff. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yes, that's right. *(Laughter)*

Participant: The display isn't coming up.

Jeff: Yes, I know. I'm sorry.

Participant: That's all right.

Jeff: We couldn't get it on today. So I'll try to walk you through the cartoons as best I can. *(Laughter)* I mean that.

So I want to talk to you today about an introduction. I want to talk to you today about what I'm calling *Covenant 101*, and then *Covenant 201*, and then *securing our covenant blessings*.

Again I simply want to say that I think that we are in a book and in a section of a particular book that demands something from us. And I'm just rejoicing that you're here, *(laughter)*, as we go through a book like this, because there's richness here. But it is certainly a demanding book.

Well if you would, turn to Hebrews 13, and I want you to look at verse 17. Not long ago I was at a presbytery meeting. And a student was giving an exam. And he was being asked about the pastorate. He was being asked about the authority of the pastorate. And he was being asked a number of questions about shepherding. And one of the men from

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the floor, an older gentleman, stood up and brought back a passage that he had quoted in the midst of his exam. And the passage was Hebrews 13:17. *“Obey your leaders and submit to them.”*

And the older gentleman brought it up and asked him, “Do you recognize that the word *obey* in that verse is in the present passive?”

Now I don’t remember whether or not that young man said he didn’t remember or did know that it was in the present passive. But that older pastor went on to explain to him the importance of that particular grammatical signifier. He said that people are to obey their leaders. That’s not in question and that’s on the face of the text. It’s clear; it’s evident.

But this older gentleman looked at that young man and said, “The passive voice of that word indicates something vital.” It indicates that the people of the congregation need to be or must be persuaded to obey. In other words, it’s incumbent upon them to obey. But it’s equally incumbent upon the leaders of the church to persuade the people of the congregation to obey.

Now that does not mean that the people in the congregation have the right to say, “Well, we’re just not persuaded, especially if it’s rooted and grounded in the word of God.” For instance, you know, if a session calls a worship service, it’s incumbent upon the people to obey, to listen, to heed the leadership of the church, and to come out and worship the living God. That’s just part of the authority vested in a session.

Transcriber’s Note: A session is the Presbyterian board of elders.

Jeff: But every session and every pastor ought to seek to persuade the people that it’s good and right and beneficial to obey.

Jeff: And I thought to myself after he sat down, that was one of those nuggets that you can read over, reading through Hebrews 13:17 and not catch. But that’s a nugget because it puts the onus on the preacher every time he stands in the pulpit to persuade people. And really, when you think about it, when you think about the pastoral office, the pastoral office is not a magisterial office. The pastor has no ability to demand anything from the people. He’s not a magistrate, not a judge. He’s not someone who can say, “Now you do this or else!” That’s impossible for the pastor to do. The pastor’s power, the elder’s power, is in their ability to persuade the people of God to do what God would have them to do. That’s the real power of the teaching ministry.

Now the reason why I reach into Hebrews 13 is because one of the things that we’ve been watching the pastor do is persuade people. He has been seeking to persuade people who want to leave the blessings of the New Covenant and return to the older time, the older covenants. And he has been trying to persuade them to stay with Jesus. And that’s what we’ve been watching. He has been actually doing what he counsels people and pastors to do.

So the question we have to ask is, how does he persuade them? You know, the question is really a vital one for any teaching ministry. How does any teacher persuade anyone? And I want you to know something. I think it’s vital that this question be asked, because I think that oftentimes it’s the case that teachers basically try to persuade people by emotional appeals or human interest stories. And so they try to generate a sense of

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sympathy. They try to put you in that emotional state where when they demand something of you, the emotional response, the emotional capital, will be built up and it will be released. And so you’ll do what it is that people want you to do.

But this particular Preacher says, ‘You know what? The bottom line is this. The way that I’m going to persuade you to do what God would have you to do is to explain the Scriptures to you. And if I explain the Scriptures to you in a clear way, then you’ll do what God would demand you to do.’ And I think that’s really what the minister has in mind here. He says, “Let’s go back to the Old Covenants. And let me explain what those Old Covenants always meant, that to which they always pointed. Let me tell you that. And if you understand that, then I don’t know why you would leave.” I think that’s what he’s saying. That’s what I think the Preacher is doing.

I do have a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon here. And Calvin is sitting at the dinner table, and he’s sitting there with his dad. And Calvin says, “I’m not eating this green stuff. You’ve got to be kidding me.”

And his dad leans over to him and says, “That’s a good idea, Calvin. It’s a plate of toxic waste that will turn you into a mutant if you eat it.” And in the next frame Calvin just devours the plate. *(Laughter)* And then you can see a blurb off to the side where Calvin is saying, “I can feel it happening already.” *(Laughter)*

And Calvin’s mom is looking at Calvin’s dad, saying, “There has got to be a better way to make him eat.” *(Laughter)*

You know, it just points out how we’re always seeking to persuade people. And if you can remember back to when your kids were little, you were always seeking to persuade them to do what it was that they were supposed to be doing, right? And the same is true here.

Participant: Hey Jeff, I didn’t know we were going to get into Calvinism today. *(Laughter)*

Second Participant: We always do.

Jeff: We’re always into Calvinism. *(Laughter)* We never leave it. *(Laughter)* You know, I want to tell you something. Oftentimes, when we talk about varying theologies, we always talk about how a man can be better than his theology. Well, that’s not the case with Calvinism. A man can never be better than his Calvinism. *(Laughter)* I thought that was funny. *(Laughter)*

Participant: I’m still thinking about it. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Don’t think too hard. *(Laughter)*

Participant: You know, I just—

Jeff: Yes, go ahead.

Participant: I mean, this is an interesting thought about the responsibility of a pastor to persuade. But I think you said, “How does the pastor persuade from the Scripture?” But that doesn’t work unless God has given ears to hear.

Jeff: Well, that’s true. Ted said that persuasion doesn’t work unless God has given ears to hear. And even then, you know, I was just telling the bishop earlier about some texts that I have my interns read. Gregory of Nazianzus is one of those texts that I have them read—*Oration 2: Flight to Pontus*. It’s a pastoral text in the early church. And one of the

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things that Nazianzus says is this. There are all different sorts of people out there. And so I think he’s the first to liken the pastorate to a spiritual doctor. And he basically says, “I’ve got all kinds of things in my medical tool bag.” He says, “I’ve got the feather in there to tickle if I need to tickle. And I’ve got the cautery if I need to cauterize someone.” So he’s got the whole spectrum of tools in his bag.

And he talks about the different types of people—the people who need public rebuke, the people who would wither under a public rebuke. And that’s true, right? I mean, there’s a lot of truth to that. People are of all different sorts and require all different sorts of interaction.

And so just explaining the Word is a little simplistic. I need to explain the Word in such a way that will fit the person to whom I’m explaining it.

And so therefore, as a pastor, you really need to exegete your people as well.

When I go to counsel a particular individual in my congregation, I need to understand how it is that he functions and works, right? Years ago I had a guy in my congregation. He was sort of a hard guy. And he decided that he wasn’t going to come to church. And he was particularly angry about something that had happened.

So two Sundays went by and he wouldn’t return my calls. And I knew this guy, you know? I knew him well. I knew him for about nine or ten years. And so I went to his door one night. And I knocked on the door and he opened it. And he said, “Jeff?”

And I said, “Jeff?” His name’s Jeff. I said, “Can I come in?” (*Laughter*) I wasn’t talking to myself. (*Laughter*) It wasn’t me; it was another person. (*Laughter*)

Participant: I thought you were playing mind games. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: No, no no. So I walked into his house and sat down. This takes a lot of context. I probably shouldn’t have told this story. (*Laughter*) I walked in and sat down and I talked to him about the issue for just a couple of minutes. And then I told him, “Jeff, if you don’t come back to church, I’m going to charge you. I’m going to bring charges against you in the courts of the church.”

Well, the next Sunday he was back in church. And I walked up to him. I put out my hand and he shook my hand. And he said, “I don’t like you very much right now.”

And I said, “That doesn’t matter. You’re here.” (*Laughter*) You asked me.

Participant: Then how about that pledge? Is that the next question?

Jeff: What’s that?

Participant: When he came back. You’re here, and then I said, “Well, what about your pledge? Are you caught up with that?” (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Okay. We’re going to go on now. So how does the Preacher persuade? Well, that takes us to the first point, *Covenant 101*. Now when you look at this particular portion of Scripture, when you look at Hebrews, one of the things that you get when you’re looking at Hebrews is that you get the sense that there are only two covenants in the book of Hebrews. You get the sense that there is the Mosaic covenant and you get the sense that there is the New Covenant. You know, he talks about the first covenant and the second covenant. And the first covenant that he’s talking about in this particular text is the Mosaic covenant. And then the second covenant is the New Covenant, the covenant that

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comes to fruition in Christ. And the thing that we have to ask ourselves at this point is are there only two covenants in Scripture? And the answer to that, obviously, is no.

But what’s happening here is that there’s a tension that’s being created between the Mosaic Covenant, which he’s calling “*the first covenant*”, and the New Covenant, which is the covenant of fulfillment. Christ comes and brings fulfillment to all of the other covenants.

But what’s happening here is that the tension is being built specifically between these two covenants. Those who would like to go back to Judaism are being viewed and probably describing themselves as people who would want to go back to the Mosaic covenant and all that it entails, with its priesthood and its sacrifices and its temple, and so on, over against the New Covenant which is Christ and all the fulfillment that is found in Him.

And so it looks as that if you were to open up the book of Hebrews and look at this particular section, you might think to yourself, “*Wow! It’s a battle between two covenants. And there must only be two covenants in the Scriptures.*” And that’s just not the case. In fact, we need to remember that this book, this Hebrews letter, is not a theology textbook. We need to remember that it’s a sermon. It’s a pastoral sermon. It’s a work of pastoral importance. And so the pastor here is really dealing pastorally with a misunderstanding that exists amongst the people of God between the two covenants in particular—the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant. And so it’s really not a work of theology per se, like we might think of a work of covenant theology explaining all of covenant theology. It’s not that. It’s really a pastoral work.

So the question that we have to ask ourselves in order to situate ourselves—and we’ve talked about this before. I think it was in chapter 7 or 8 where we went over some of this stuff. But I want to reiterate some of it because it never hurts to sort of solidify this sort of thing in your thinking.

But I want to ask the question, a basic question. *What is a covenant?* Well, the answer to that is that it’s a relationship. It’s a legal relationship that God establishes with His people and sets up or guarantees that relationship by His word. So it’s a relationship, a legal relationship that God sets up with us. And it’s one that He guarantees by His word. He establishes it on the basis of His word.

Now when you think about the covenantal structure in the Bible, you immediately think of two covenants. There is *the covenant of works* that was established with Adam in the garden which lasts until Genesis chapter 3. And then immediately following the covenant of works is the establishment of *the covenant of grace*.

Now there’s really a third covenant. And I really don’t want to get into all of the ins and the outs of this particular covenant. But I want to say this to you. I’ve said to you before that the Bible is really the book of two Adams. There’s Adam the first, and there’s Adam the second. And God establishes the covenant of works between Himself and Adam in the garden. And Adam the first fails to keep the commandment of God. And so the covenant of works is broken. And Adam and all of his posterity inherit the curse.

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God establishes a second covenant with a second Adam. And that covenant is called *the covenant of redemption*. And it is on the basis of the covenant of redemption that the second Adam fulfills what the first Adam failed to fulfill.

Now where does the covenant of grace come in? The covenant of grace is the covenant that God makes with people who are in Jesus Christ, that they might receive all of the blessings that the second Adam earned in the covenant of redemption. Does that make sense to you? I heard “mmm” and then a lot of silence throughout a sector. Go ahead.

Participant: Where do you find that?

Jeff: Where do I find that? Places like Isaiah, where God says of Jesus that He is the covenant, that Jesus is the covenant to the people of Israel. I think it’s Isaiah 42. That would be a classic place. Let me see if I can put my eye on that. Ted, you go ahead.

Ted: I was going to ask who these covenants are for. Is the covenant of works for all humanity? The covenant of grace is for God’s people alone, right?

Jeff: Yep.

Ted: But who is the covenant of redemption for, then?

Participant: Jesus.

Jeff: The covenant of redemption is the covenant that exists between Father and Son, so that the Son keeps the requirement that the Father stipulates, that He might be the second Adam, and so inherit the promises.

Ted: So it being between the Father and the Son, is it kind of like in the heavenlies?

Jeff: Here’s what we have to remember. It’s a temporal covenant. It was planned in eternity. But there is no covenantal relationship that exists between Father, Son and Spirit in eternity. It was planned in eternity and carried out temporally in the economy of creation.

Ted: You’re saying some strange things today.

Jeff: I’m saying some strange things? So one of the places that I would go to is, *“Behold My Servant whom I uphold,
My Chosen, in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him.
He will bring forth justice to the nations.”*

But there is a particular spot here in Isaiah where Christ is called—

Participant: Verse 6?

Jeff: Is it verse 6 of that chapter?

Participant: 4-6?

Jeff: Yes.

*“I will give You as a covenant for the people,
A light to the nations,
To open the eyes that are blind.”*

And so I think that what you find there is the idea that there is a covenant that exists between the Father and the Son, such that the Son becomes the second Adam who fulfills what the first Adam fails to fulfill. But the benefits of that covenant were not for the Son only. The benefits of that covenant were for His people.

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So I'll give you a practical understanding of that in terms of its application. When we talk about receiving righteousness from God, or being justified, we never talk about receiving a righteousness that is apart from God. We talk about receiving who's righteousness? The righteousness of Christ as we stand in Him. And therefore, when you think about the righteousness of Christ, we're thinking not necessarily about His righteousness that He possessed in eternity. We're thinking about the righteousness that He earned according to His covenantal obedience. And so that covenantal obedience has to do with the covenant of redemption between Father and Son. And the benefits of that covenant that were earned by Christ are ours in the covenant of grace as we are united to the One who earned them. Does that make sense?

Participant: No.

Jeff: Okay. Help me to flush out where you're still misunderstanding.

Participant: If you want to build a hospital, you have to have a contractor. So you make a deal with the contractor for the sake of building the hospital.

Jeff: Yes. That's a great illustration. So you have the folks who signed the contract, and then you've got the outworking of it. Yes?

Participant: Yet the contract is only temporary. The contract between the hospital and the board is only temporary.

Second Participant: All analogies fail.

Jeff: Yes. All analogies somewhat fail.

Participant: But that would be something like the covenant of redemption, would it not?

Jeff: You know what? This might be a little bit more than what we want to tackle today. Actually, this is just an ancillary point. (*Laughter*) So how about if we just say it like this today. We have all of the benefits that Christ earned in the covenant of grace. And so we'll just leave it like that.

And let me put it like this. That covenant of grace then is one covenant. That one covenant, the covenant of grace, is like a flower. It has many petals, but it's one flower.

And so, for instance, when we look at the different administrations of the covenant, the different petals of the covenant, one of the things that we realize is that it's just one covenant exfoliating and expanding on one message of what that covenant has to say.

So for instance, when we look at the Noahic covenant, we look at God preserving the stage of redemption. And when we look at Abraham we look at the characters, the first redemptive characters, being called out upon that stage, forming a people. And then the Mosaic covenant is the giving of land to that people, and giving that people a law whereby God says, "This is what you need to do when you enter into that land." And then the Davidic covenant promises a king over that people. And then the New Covenant comes along, fulfilled in Jesus. And He fulfills the entire thing. So He is the King who keeps the law, who grants all authority in heaven and on earth to all the people, all His people. So there's a progressive unveiling of what this covenant entails. And then in the fulfillment there is the riches of the benefits of that.

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And so when we think about the covenants, we need to think about two covenants—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. But the covenant of grace has five exfoliations, the fifth being its fulfilling exfoliation.

And here’s the reason why I say this. When we think about this, we need to go to Covenant 201. And we need to ask ourselves. Well, what’s the purpose of the Mosaic covenant? Because really, what we’re finding is that if you think about the five administrations of the covenant, where you have the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Davidic and the New, one of the things that we’re finding is that the Mosaic and the New exfoliations are pitted against one another in the book of Hebrews. Does that make sense to you?

Men: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. So we have to ask ourselves when we hit 201, we have to ask ourselves, well, what’s the purpose of the Mosaic covenant anyway? Now we know the purpose of the Mosaic covenant. We’ve talked about it before. It’s come to our attention repeatedly. And it’s this. The Mosaic covenant was given so that the law could draw forth sin from the lives of the people. In other words, God would give them a law. And they would realize that they could not keep that law. And so in the face of the law they would be confronted with their own sinfulness. That’s why the law was given. We’re told that in Romans 5:20, and the same thing in Galatians 5.

Transcriber’s Note: Romans 5:20, ESV. *“Now the law came in to increase the trespass.”*

Jeff: Paul says that’s why the law was given, and God inspired him. Now here’s the question I have for you. And really it’s a question that I’m creating to try to help you see the unity of the covenants, but the tension that exists in this particular church.

So let me ask you a question. If that’s the purpose of the law, if the purpose of the law is to draw out sin, then here’s the question I have for you. Were those living under the administration of the law beyond salvation?

Now you would say,--

Participant: No.

Jeff: You would say no. I’m glad you would say no. I want you to look at verse 15. Verse 15 says this. *“For this reason He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that since death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant”,--now that’s under the Mosaic covenant—“those who have been called may receive the promise of eternal salvation.”*

Transcriber’s Note: NASB.

Jeff: Now I want you to think about that. What he’s saying in verse 15 is this. Those who are part of the Mosaic administration receive what? Eternal salvation. But according to what? According to the promise, right? According to the promise. So let’s think about that promise aspect for a minute.

I want you to go with me to Galatians 3:15-18 for a minute. Let me read it to you. Now remember the covenants. The covenants are the Noahic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the New Covenant. And right

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now we’re seeing the tension between the Mosaic covenant, which he has called the first covenant, and the New Covenant which has fulfillment in Christ.

Now He has said that the people under the Mosaic covenant, that covenant which was law-oriented to tease out sin, people were saved under that covenant. How? By the promise.

Galatians 3:15-18. Listen to this. *“Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations. Even though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed. He does not say ‘and to seeds’, as referring to many, but rather One, ‘and to your Seed’, that is Christ. What I am saying is this. The law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise. But God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.”*

Now remember that promise. Time is fleeing from us. I’m sorry if the covenant of redemption thing brought us askew. But remember the promise. The promise was Genesis 3:15.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15, ESV. *“He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

Jeff: And that promise was enacted by Abraham at the command of God. Remember what He told him. Cut the animals in half, arrange them in a path. This was a King and a servant treaty covenant. And the King would say, “This is who I am. This is what I expect from you. Now walk before Me and be blameless.” The servant would then walk through the halves, saying, “I promise to be an obedient servant to You. And if I’m not an obedient servant to You, then may I be like these animals and ripped asunder.”

Now what happens in that covenant is this. Abram falls into a deep sleep. And who is it who passes through the halves? It’s the smoking fire-pot, the theophany of God. God passes through the halves, and so says to Abram, “I will secure covenant blessing for you.”

But that also means that not only will He secure covenant blessing, but He has to bear the covenant curses that are already upon Abram. But you get the promises. “I,” says God, “will do this for you. I will bear the curse. I will secure the blessing of the covenant for you.” That’s the promise of the Abrahamic covenant.

Now think about what he says. That means that when you have a human covenant, you can’t add conditions after the fact. That covenant is a covenant. And this is what he says. He says that the law, added 430 years later, does not add conditions, nor does it invalidate the promise. I think that’s good stuff! I mean, that’s like fertile stuff for the soul, you know? It’s so good! Anyway,-- *(Laughter)*

Participant: Jeff, I know you’re rushing. But I just wish you had some practical application for what you’re saying. How does this apply? You’re very excited about it. I’m not getting excited. Of course, my feelings are not facts. But I wonder. Does anybody else need kind of an application?

Jeff: Yes. Practical application.

Participant: Just reading verse 15 is great. The application is the difficulty.

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Second Participant: You’ve got to speak up like Ted. If you don’t, you get a microphone. *(Laughter)*

First Participant: If you just read verse 15 in Hebrews 9, it would appear that everybody under the Old Covenant is included in salvation. What distinguishes it?

Jeff: What distinguishes—

Participant: Who’s in and who’s out under the Old Covenant? It’s because of Christ.

Jeff: Remember what Paul says in Romans 9. Not everyone who is of ethnic Israel is Israel.

Participant: Yes, I understand. And I would go there. My reading from the text here is not clear in Hebrews. Can you clear it up in Hebrews somewhere along the line?

Second Participant: *“That those who are called may inherit the promises.”*

Jeff: Yes, I’m turning there. But I think that’s the answer I would give.

Participant: Amen.

Participant: 9:15. That seems to spell it out.

Jeff: 9:15?

Participant: The righteous are those who are called.

Jeff: Yes, Gary. I think I would go there to that. That’s the idea. Yes?

Participant: To Ted’s point, I think of some applications. If you look at 1 Corinthians 1:30, it really talks about how it’s been done. Let me pull it up. And so I think the practical application of what you’re preaching here and talking about is that we have that rest in Christ, because He is the sin-bearer for us. He’s also the righteousness for us. So it’s not that we can earn it or do anything. But there’s absolute rest and peace in Him from what He’s done. That’s what I’m getting from what you’re talking about through all these comments.

Transcriber’s Note: 1 Corinthians 1:30, ESV. *“And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,—righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”*

Jeff: Yes. So just to reiterate Galatians 3:18, “for if the inheritance is based on the law, it’s no longer based on the promise. But God has granted it to Abraham by means of the promise.” And it’s in that text that he says that we’re children of Abraham if we have faith, right? And so we’re saved by the promise. So eternal life is based upon the promise.

And so I guess from my perspective, the practical point that I would make is why the law? Why the law under the Mosaic administration? And why the law in one sense, in one aspect, why its continuing influence and importance? And that is that the law still does what it did under the Mosaic covenant. It still confronts me as a sinner and convicts me as such. So when I read the law I can’t help but read the law, whether I find it in the Ten Commandments or in the Sermon On the Mount, and be convicted by it.

And then what happens, what begins to happen, is that for me—and maybe it’s not this way for you—but for me what begins to happen is that if I just examine myself in the light of the law, which is sometimes easy to do; you forget that you’re in Christ. And you never go to the law without being in Christ, but you can do that. And then what you begin to do is that you begin to think about all your failures. And then what you begin to think about is that the circumstances of your life are such that I’m being punished by God for

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doing the things that I’ve done, right? Now there may be genuine consequences in life. But years after the fact you begin to think, *I know why this is happening. This is happening because of what I did ten years ago.* You know what I mean? Maybe I’m being autobiographical at this point—strike the tape here, Don! (*Laughter*) But I don’t have a tendency to think that it’s just me. I have a tendency to think that many of us think that Christ has to persuade a hard-hearted Father to accept us.

And in my mind that’s kind of the practical payoff. When I go to the law, it convicts me and shows me how unworthy I am of sonship. And yet the law’s purpose is to do that. But the law’s purpose is not more than that. In other words, the law can’t demand obedience of me in order to be saved, because I can’t fulfill it.

You know, it’s sort of like one of my favorite stories. And this may cloud the issue. But if you’ve read *Pilgrim’s Progress*, or if you’ve listened to it with the recording that John put up on the website, you remember Faithful. He’s following along and he comes to Christian. And Faithful is telling Christian a story. And he says, “You know, I hung around with Adam the first for a little while, and he offered me his daughters. And I remember how he was really lustful toward his daughters. And I was really tempted to stay. And then I left.”

And he said, “When I left this guy came up to me and beat me with a stick.” And he said, “When I came to there he was again, and he beat me again.”

I said, “Have mercy on me!”

And he says, “I don’t know how to show mercy.”

And Christian says to him, “That was Moses. That was the law.”

And then he says, “I saw this man walk by with wounds in His hands and in His feet and His side.” And that was Christ. And remember, that’s the idea, right? The law doesn’t know how to show us mercy. But Christ does. And in Christ our conscience is cleansed from the guilt of the law. And to me that’s kind of the idea there. Yes?

Participant: I was just going to say that if God is my Substitute, what more could I possibly need? He does everything perfectly.

Jeff: Yes, yes.

Participant: I would just second this. Galatians is saying that God is our Substitute in Christ. I mean, wow!

Jeff: Yes, and that’s a great way to put it—wow!

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: That’s right. Well, let me run through this last point. It’s about *securing our blessedness*.

Now verses 16 and 17 are challenging verses. And they’re challenging verses because the term *diotheke* is used in verse 15. And it’s used in verse 16. And it’s the same word, and it’s translated two different ways. And it can be. It’s translated in verse 15 as *covenant*. It’s translated in verse 16 as *will*. And it’s translated in the rest of 17 in the same way, *will*. And then when you return to 18 it’s translated *covenant* again.

So it’s able to bear that meaning. In fact, it’s able to be translated *covenant* or *will* or *testament*, or if it’s in the plural, *ordinances*. It has that ability.

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But at this point translators have looked at this and said that what they think is going on is that now he is talking about a last will and testament. The idea then is that a will is only effectualized when one dies. And so that’s what he’s talking about here.

I demure from that. I realize that this is maybe a little bit for you to think about. It’s certainly quite a lot for me to think about, so I’ll give it to you quickly. So here’s the flow of what I’m going to say to you. The flow of what I’m going to say to you is that in verse 15 you’re given a principle. And that’s what we’ve been looking at. That’s really the foundation of 15-22. It’s the principle that we’ve been looking at.

Verses 16 and 17 are an explanation of that principle. And verses 18-22 I find as an illustration of that principle, which means that I’m going to look at verses 16 and 17 as being consistent with verse 15, and so want to render 16 and 17 as *covenant* instead of *will*.

So verse 15 tells us what? What’s the principle set forth? Well, verse 15 says that Christ’s death is set over against the Abrahamic covenant. In other words, when we think about Christ’s death, we’re supposed to think about Christ as the fulfillment of that covenant, in other words, that Abrahamic promise that was cut in Genesis chapter 15.

If you go with me on this, that means verses 16 and 17, if you see them as an explanation of verse 15 which is the principle, then that means this. That means that the covenant requires death that is represented in the animal.

So you see the difference. I’m not saying and I’m not now talking about a will and that the person who creates the will has to die in order for the will to come into effect. What I’m saying is, keep with the idea of covenant that was cut in Genesis 15. And what you find is that somebody has to die. And the somebody that has to die is the animals. And the animals represent Abraham, who is supposed to be the one who walks through the halves, saying, “May this be me if I fail to keep this covenant.”

And so the covenant requires death, which is represented in the animal. And the animal represents the one cutting the covenant, the one party.

Verses 18-22, then, illustrate that, because now, all of a sudden, translators come back to the word *covenant*. And they really take us back to Exodus 24, where Moses with the blood of the covenant sprinkles everything by blood. And so the people are sprinkled with blood—the blood of their representative. And that blood of their representative is the animal that took their place, which prefigures the One who would take that animal’s place for them, which is Christ Jesus, for the forgiveness of their sins. And I think that’s the consistency of 15-22 at that point.

I know that’s a lot, and it’s brief. But any questions about that?

All right; let me pray for us. And I promise that the next book we engage in we will not ask Sig what we’re going to do. (*Laughter*) We’ll get a very practical book.

Let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time you’ve given. Bless us, Lord. And Father, we come to you, and oftentimes we’re humorous about the difficulty of what we have here. And yet there is a profundity here that we need to grasp, a spiritual reality which ministers to the heart and soul, and we’re thankful for it. We pray, Lord, that You will make us continually a people who strive to understand the riches of Your grace found in the Lord Jesus Christ and explained in these letters in this way.

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Father, give me the ability to speak. And give us all the ability to understand. Father, we pray that through it all that Christ will be glorified. We ask it in His name. Amen.

(Applause)