

“By a New and Living Way”

Fixing Our Eyes On Jesus Our High Priest

Hebrews 10:19-25

Dr. Jeff Stivason

January 18, 2019

Jeff: All right, Don. Light My Fire. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Don starts to play “Light My Fire.” *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I knew it. *(Laughter)* Why don’t you lead us into prayer, Don? *(Laughter)*

(Music)

Our gracious heavenly Father, we are so thankful for so many things. We are gathered here today because we love Your word. And we know that the love that we have for that Word and for You who are the Author of this Word, that love originates not in us but in You. You sparked it in us. You fanned it into flame. You brought it to maturity before our bringing it to maturity. And Father, we are thankful for what You’re doing in our lives.

Father, as we bow before You, we recognize that there is growth in the life of faith. And so as we come to You this morning, we also acknowledge that that growth comes through the means of grace. And one of those very important means is Your word. And so to gather before You in the morning that we might study it, well that’s an acknowledgment that You take up this Word by Your Spirit because it is Yours. You bring it to bear upon our lives. You change us through and by it. And Father, we’re thankful for that. But we also recognize that this Word is a powerful Word. It doesn’t simply change our lives, those who are in You, but it has a way of getting into the lives of people who do not know You, who suppress that truth in unrighteousness, and it resurrects them.

So Father, we pray that if there are any here today, or if there are any who cross our path today who don’t know You, we pray that we might speak a seasonable word, one that will bring a springtime to their lives, that they might rise to know You.

Father, we’re thankful for the many things that You’ve done in our midst. Father, we’re thankful for the people You touch. We ask that You would continue to do so. But we pray especially that You will touch our lives, that through us You might touch others. And so we ask these things in the precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, while Don is finding Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19, *(laughter)*,

Don: I’ll have it in about thirty seconds.

Jeff: Okay. I just want to ask you guys to consider something. The Paideia Center is on again. And the Paideia Center is a center for theological discipleship. And last year in the fall we read through Gregory of Nazianzus’ “Five Orations on Christ”, and we did that over a three-month period, meeting the first Thursday of every month.

And I just went down to Florida. I almost didn’t return. *(Laughter)* I said that in front of my wife when she was elsewhere in the audience this past week. And it was silent, and she goes, “Oh, yes he did.” *(Laughter)* “He was closer than he thinks.”

Anyway, it was a great conference. There’s another Paideia Center that’s coming up in the spring. And it’s the first Thursday of March, April and May. And we’re a little closer to home on this particular topic. We’re going to be reading through Martin Luther’s

“By a New and Living Way”

Larger Catechism, the annotated version. So there’s room for twenty guys or gals. This is not just a guy thing. So there is room for twenty folks. \$20 gets you the books sent to you and your registration paid. We meet down in the city at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary. We have a good time for about an hour-and-a-half, discussing theology together that arises out of the book we’ve read. It’s really and truly a discussion group. So if you’re interested in registering, just go to <http://paedieacenter.com> and you can register there. All right. Hebrews—

Participant: What time of the day?

Jeff: It’s at 7:00 at night. It goes from 7:00 to 8:30. So we usually just take a five-minute break in the middle unless we’re on a roll. But it’s great! It’s a really good time!

You know, this is kind of a difficult thing in some ways. If you’re looking for people to read something a little bit heavier,—well, we’re going to read a catechism; that’s not necessarily heavier. But in today’s world oftentimes that’s viewed as heavier theology. If you’re looking to read some heavier theology. Or a little bit heavier, and you have difficulty finding people to do that with, this is a great place to be. I was actually looking for that sort of thing for a while. I tried to get some pastors together, but pastors are just too busy to take the time to read reflectively on some of the things that you might enjoy reading.

So this turned out to scratch my itch. It was a great place to be. There were about ten or eleven guys who signed up the last time and we enjoyed ourselves. Sig and Gary Dunbar signed up the last time, so you can talk to them about it. Well, talk to Gary.

(Laughter)

Sig: I made it once out of the three sessions.

Jeff: I wasn’t going to say that. I’m just harassing you.

Sig: I made it once, though.

Jeff: You did. All right, you did. All right. So why don’t we turn our attention to Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19-25. That’s one of my favorite sections in the book of Hebrews. Don, do you have that ready to go?

Don: I do.

Jeff: Okay.

Don: *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”* This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. Okay, so today I’d like to talk about three things in particular. First of all, just some introductory things. Second of all, *the promise that was kept in Christ*, and then *the pattern for life in God’s house*. I think those three things emerge out of this text.

“By a New and Living Way”

Actually, we could have divided this text into two texts. But I kept it together, and you’ll see why as we go.

I want to talk to you first of all about some introductory stuff. One of the things that I want you to see as we go through the Bible together, wherever we are in the Bible, I want you to see *the unity of the Scriptures*. I think that too often we do not see a unity in the Bible. And yet it’s there.

I think I’ve said this to you before. One of the things that you might say if you were summarizing the whole of Scripture, you might say that it’s the story of two Adams. You might say that it’s about the first Adam and his failure. And it’s about the last Adam, or the second Adam, or the eschatological Adam and His success. And you’re in either Adam the first, which is where everyone once was, or you’re in Adam the second, the last Adam. And so you can sum up the Scriptures in terms of two Adams—the two-Adam story.

Or you might sum up the Scriptures by way of talking about *the two covenants*, the covenant of works that really comes to an end in Genesis chapter 3, and then the covenant of grace which was introduced in chapter 3 of Genesis and unfolds with different exfoliations throughout the Scriptures, each one building upon the other, to the extent that when you get to the New Testament, Paul could write in Galatians chapter 3 that Abraham had the gospel preached to him all the way back in Genesis chapter 12.

And so there’s a unity to the Scriptures that we cannot miss. I think that if you want to interpret the Scriptures properly, if you want to hear them and you want them to resonate with you in the most magnificent way, you’ve got to see that unity. You’ve got to see it. And that’s difficult, especially when you begin the year and your determination is to read all 66 books in a year or two years. The book can look pretty fragmented when you’re in the deep weeds of the genealogies or the numbers, or all of the sacrifices. And yet we need to remember that there’s a unity.

The reason I stress that is because I want to talk to you about the unity of the Scriptures, especially as it arises in this particular text. But before I talk to you about the unity, let me also talk to you about time travel. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff has a slide of a British phone booth.

Jeff: You may look at this and think to yourself that this just looks like, you know, a British—

Participant: Dr. Who.

Jeff: It’s Dr. Who. And you may think to yourself that Dr. Who is a relatively recent creation of this generation in which we are living. But you would be wrong. Dr. Who is at least forty years old, I think, at least. And the reason I know that is because when I was a boy back in the 1970s, after dinner my dad would make his way from the dinner table to the front of the television set where we had a box that introduced 13 new channels to us. *(Laughter)*

Participant: Wow!

Jeff: And in that box was Dr. Who. And he would watch Dr. Who and I hated Dr. Who. *(Laughter)* But my dad watched Dr. Who. So I would sit there and I would watch Dr. Who with him to spend the time with him.

“By a New and Living Way”

Years later I said to him, “Do you remember when we watched ‘Dr. Who?’”

He said, “I hated Dr. Who.” (*Laughter*) Nevertheless, Dr. Who was a time traveler.

Participant: 1963.

Jeff: 1963, more than forty years old. Dr. Who was a time traveler. Now we need to travel in time. If we could step into the Tartus and if we could all fit, (it may not look like it, but we could)—if we could step into the Tartus and travel back into time about 4,000 years, we would travel back to Genesis 15. And in Genesis chapter 15, if we all got out of the Tartus and we looked across the way, we would have been witness to something very weird, to say the least.

We would have watched a figure who was Abram at the time scurrying around, engaged in a practice probably foreign to our very eyes and our sensibilities. He was gathering animals for himself. He was slaughtering those animals. And then he was engaged in the very difficult work of cutting them right down the middle so that the animal lay in two halves, almost as if a giant sword had severed the animal right down through the middle.

And then he arranged the halves. And he arranged the halves so that they would be situated on a slope that led down on each side into a very small ditch or a very small low point between the halves.

And we would sit back and we would say to ourselves, “What in the world is happening here?” And let’s suppose that someone came by, and we say to him, “Why in the world is that man over there doing the things that he’s doing? We don’t understand this.”

And he would say to us, “Now listen. I want to tell you something. What you are watching is a treaty covenant. You’re watching a treaty covenant that takes place between a king and his servants. So that man over there is the servant. And that man is engaged in getting the treaty covenant ready to enact. He’s the servant.

“Now here’s what’s going to happen. What’s going to happen is that once he gets all things ready, the King is going to appear. And then the King is going to tell him. He’s going to make some formal pronouncement and say to him, ‘I am the King.’ And then he’s going to tell him, ‘This is what I’ve done for you.’”

For instance, we read in Exodus chapter 20, “*I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*” So he identifies who He is. He identifies what He’s done. And then He’ll say, “*Walk before Me and be blameless.*” “And this is how you do it.” And in Exodus 20 He lists the Ten Commandments. He lists stipulations that His servant must follow.

And then this man would say to us, “Then it will be the servant’s turn.” And the servant will look at the King and say, “If I fail to keep my pledge of loyalty to You by breaking any one of these commandments, may I be like these animals that have been torn asunder.” And then what the man would do is that he would walk down through the halves so that the blood would get on his tassels and his robe. And he would emerge on the other side, having made a pledge to his King that he would be faithful to Him.

Now that is exactly what’s happening in Genesis chapter 15. The question that we have to ask ourselves is an important one. The question that we have to ask ourselves is

“By a New and Living Way”

this. Hadn't Abraham failed already to be faithful to his King? And wouldn't he continue to fail in his obedience to his King? And if you answer yes, he had failed, then you would be absolutely 100% correct.

Now here's the deal. The deal is that Abraham is a sinner because Abraham is in Adam. And he can't get around that fact. He can't escape that fact on his own merit. He can't do it. And so what happens is this. If we were to stay there, and we were to continue to watch this event unfold, one of the things that we would have noticed before Abram does this, is that Abram begins to beat off the birds and so forth, that are trying to crowd around the corpses.

But then what does he do? He falls asleep. He falls asleep, and then a fire-pot appears. And the fire-pot is a theophany. It's an appearance of God. A theophany is *Theo*,--God, and *phanatos*, an appearance, a God appearance. And so this God appearance is in the smoking fire-pot. And it passes through the halves.

Now I want you to think about that a minute. Why in the world, when the servant is supposed to pass through the halves, expressing his loyalty to his King, why in the world does the King appear in this case and pass through the halves, while the servant or the slave is asleep on the ground? That's a bit perplexing.

And that's exactly right. The King is substituting Himself for the servant. And He's saying, "I will bear not only the obligations of the covenant that was just made, but I will also bear the penalty when you fail." Okay?

Now that is the background that we have to understand before we move to the next point. But I want to just pause and ask you if there is anything that you want to think about or work through together before we move on to the next point? Yes?

Participant: So that was unusual at that time to have a covenant where the king would pass through. The ceremony was recognizable to Abraham.

Jeff: It was very recognizable to Abraham. But it was unheard of for the king to substitute himself for the servant.

Participant: But why would God put Abraham to sleep?

Jeff: Well, because the idea of a substitute is very strong here, right?

Participant: Yes.

Jeff: So Abraham would have understood. I mean, think about it. I think Abraham would have understood himself to be the one who was supposed to walk through these halves.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: But instead God puts him into a deep sleep. And yet while he's asleep, he can see the vision. And he sees God substituting Himself for him. But not just for him, for his posterity as well, right? And this is the gospel that is coming together in pieces, types and images for not only Abraham to see, but also for us to see.

Now one of the things that you might ask yourself is why is it important for us to go back and know this sort of thing? Well, the only thing I would say to you is this. Doesn't this context provide a richness for the gospel? Though it's a forerunner of the gospel, it provides something of a rich texture for our understanding of the gospel today. And hopefully that will begin to unfold more and more. Ted?

“By a New and Living Way”

Ted: I was just going to say that the image of Abram falling asleep, or being made to fall asleep, I’m actually looking for that verse. (*unclear*) I’m trying to find where God made Abram fall asleep.

Jeff: Yes. I don’t think it says that there. But that’s—

Ted: It’s like—

Participant: Verse 12.

Ted: What?

Participant: Verse 12.

Ted: Verse 12?

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 15:12, NKJV. *“Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.”*

Jeff: Yes. I don’t think that it says explicitly that it was God. But the idea of there being a deep darkness—

Participant: But sinners do.

Ted: I mean, to me—

Participant: And then in the garden of Gethsemane, as you noted earlier.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: I mean, that’s our condition. It’s not that we are given obligations and we work very hard to do them. It’s that we’re given obligations and we fall asleep.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: Right.

Ted: I mean, it’s much worse than we think it is. It’s our condition.

Jeff: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Ted: I tried real hard, God, but I just couldn’t quite do it. Boys will be boys.

Jeff: Yes. You know, I never thought about it from that direction, though.

Ted: No, it’s not just that. It’s God saying, “Okay. I’m the Creator of the universe, and here’s what you’re supposed to do.” And he says, “Okay, God.”

Transcriber’s Note: Ted yawns as he says it. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I know. Yes, right. Right.

Ted: Shouldn’t the Creator of the universe obliterate us all in an instant for our arrogance?

Jeff: Yes, right. Well, you know, this is the funny thing, right? I used to think to myself, I wonder what this would have been like for Abram to get these halves together? I mean surely, because of his failures already, he’s got to be saying to himself, “You know what? As soon as I step out from these halves, I’m going to get slaughtered! I mean, I’m going to get torn in half just like these animals, because I’m a sinner, and I’m going to sin,” right? That’s the idea, right? Okay.

All right. Well, let’s talk now about *the promise that is kept in Christ*. I want you to see that Genesis 15 has its background even in Hebrews, even before this. So if you go to Hebrews chapter 6, you can read in verse 1 this idea there. Actually, it’s in verse 13. I left out the 3. Sorry about that. *“For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself.”* And so, picking up on Genesis chapter 12, and helping us to think about that which is promised to Abraham, and how

“By a New and Living Way”

God is indeed the One who is Abram’s reward and shield. And you find that even here in the forerunners of this text.

Now what I want us to think about is that I want us to think about a couple of things that arise from this text. First of all, I want you to think about something that we’ve been thinking about, and that is that *there is blood required in order for us to enter into the presence of God*. Now typically when we think of blood required, we don’t think about the temple curtain being torn in two. And yet that’s the idea here, or at least that’s what comes to mind, that the blood provides access to the Father. And that blood that was shed was the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But if you look carefully at the text, the curtain here is not the curtain of the temple. If you look closely at the text, the curtain that’s here is the curtain of Christ’s flesh. That’s what it says.

Now when you notice that, one of the things that springs to mind is the Genesis 15 story, wherein we find that Jesus Himself, now under the image of the curtain, is torn just like the animals were torn in Genesis chapter 15. And if we remember that Jesus is not only a Substitute for our obedience, but He’s also a Substitute for the penalty aspect of the covenant, we then realize that He is bearing in His flesh the penalty of that covenant in Genesis chapter 15. His flesh is torn asunder like the animals on the cross at Calvary.

That’s what we’re being told. We are being told that He bore the penalty for our sins. And we’re being told in a striking way, in a way that reminds us of Genesis chapter 15, and how God promised to bear that penalty.

So I think that’s a really striking thing. But it doesn’t end there. It actually goes even further.

Here we have this expression, “*the new and living way*.” Now that’s an interesting expression. But we don’t quite know what to do with the word *new*. The word *living* is pretty easy to understand. I mean, you’ve watched it appear before in the book of Hebrews. It has this idea of vitality, of something living; it’s vital. But what about this idea of *new*?

Well, if you do a search in some of the Greek dictionaries,--and I’m going to give you what I found from the *Fryburg Dictionary* and from Liddell and Scott and Jones, just a couple of Greek dictionaries,--you’ll find something absolutely striking. *New* has a nuance to it. *New* has the idea of *fresh*.

Now that still doesn’t help us, does it? I mean, we think to ourselves, well, if it’s fresh, it’s new. Sure, I understand that. But here’s the context. This word is used only once in the New Testament. But when you study it in light of other appearances in other Greek writings, one of the things that you discover in Liddell and Scott and Jones, and Fryburg points it out, is this. You discover that *fresh* means *freshly killed*. In other words, not yet decomposed, uncoagulated. In other words, the kill is fresh, and the blood is still flowing. That’s the idea.

Now when you look at it from that particular angle, “*a new and living way*” brings to mind what? A freshly killed living way, which brings to mind what? The death and resurrection of Christ.

“By a New and Living Way”

And so in this picture that is being painted in these words, not only are we taken back to Genesis chapter 15, where we find that in His flesh He was torn asunder like the animals, so bearing the penalty for our sins, and so freshly killed, but He’s also living. In other words, He doesn’t remain dead long. It’s the Resurrection!

And why is the Resurrection important here? Why is it important for us? Well, it’s important because it bears witness to the fact that Christ’s sacrifice was acceptable to the Father.

But it’s actually more than that. It’s the question of how can you keep a good Man down?

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: If Jesus was utterly righteous in His substitutionary obedience for us, how could it have been just for God to leave Him in the grave? After He had made atonement in His body on the tree and died and was buried, the righteousness of Christ was actually screaming that “the just thing is for Me to rise,” because death is the penalty for sin.

And so when you think about this whole idea of substitution, you think about it both in terms of obedience to the precept, but also bearing the penalty. And both of those things are in the Genesis 15 covenant. Both of those things make their appearance here, and actually strike the match of our imagination as we think back to Genesis chapter 15, and I think rightfully so.

I think that if you unwind this and pursue it even further, you get the idea that you find in Genesis 22. You remember that when Abraham was supposed to sacrifice his own son Isaac that he was supposed to sacrifice him on Mount Moriah. And God stays his hand, and he is told that God will provide the sacrifice. It’s just wonderful! The whole thing is absolutely rich and wonderful when you think about it. I’m going to say one more thing about this particular point. But I want to stop here just in case you have questions, or if you want to mull some stuff over. Yes?

Participant: I’ll just make the comment that when you hear these things, they just support the inspiration of Scripture in such an incredible way. People sort of blow the Bible off and say, “Well, that was just written by whoever.” There’s no way! There’s just no way; this is so rich.

Jeff: Yes. And you know, that kind of strikes at the chord of unity that I talked about earlier when we started. You know, I got roped into teaching. I say this like I don’t really like it, which would be accurate. *(Laughter)* I got roped into teaching eighth and ninth graders literature at this home school co-op. Well, you know, there’s nothing worse than getting together with kids who hate reading literature. *(Laughter)* There’s just absolutely nothing worse.

So over the Christmas break I had them read Charles Dickens’ “*A Christmas Carol*.” I thought I would be the hero. It’s less than a hundred pages. Over the holiday season you’re reading the Christmas story. They came in complaining. *(Laughter)* I couldn’t believe it. I said, “What is the matter with these kids? Next book, 500 pages, next week.” *(Laughter)*

Anyway, one of the things that I’m trying to show them is that when you read a book, you have to catch the connections. That makes reading so much funner when you think

“By a New and Living Way”

about it. More fun; sorry about that. (*Laughter*) It’s wonderful when you think about some of the connections that appear early and later.

You know, one of the things in Scrooge that I pointed out to them,--and you could just see this one boy’s eyes; he got it, you know,--in the very beginning of the book, when Scrooge is still a scoundrel and the alms collectors come in, and they talk to him about why they’re collecting at this time of year because there’s want. And Scrooge basically gives them the talk of “I don’t know that.”

And they say, “Well, you could know it.”

And he says, “That’s none of my business.”

And I said to them, “What’s happening here?” What’s happening here is that we’re being introduced to Want and Ignorance, who appear as two children under the robe of The Ghost of Christmas Present. And I said, you know, if you get the connections,--and this one little boy said, “Oh, I get it!” But whether it’s literature or it’s holy literature, it makes the reading and the study of Scripture come alive, you know? It’s just wonderful! I mean, it is a living book. But we come alive when we see things like that in the Scriptures. I guess that’s a better way to say it.

Participant: Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: As a follow-up to Jim, where he spoke about people blowing off the Scripture, I’m not concerned so much about pagans because they don’t have the Spirit of God. You understand that. It’s the Christians who do battle. And the connection that you’re drawing between the Old Testament and the New Testament makes it clear that there’s a total continuity. And so often we get messages in our churches that say that there really is no continuity. Those were the bad guys back there. The Pharisees, you know, they were the stupid and ignorant ones. And now we’re the bright ones. And I guess, to take it just a step deeper, you said that Hebrews might have been a sermon?

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: So we’re in a Christian congregation in 70 A.D. or 80. And they’re sitting around listening to this sermon being read to them. I wonder if anyone was getting these connections, because before you explained it I had never seen these connections. And I just wondered if they were getting them, or if they were saying, “Oh my gosh, these scholars drive me nuts! Let’s get down to the real thing, get saved and go to heaven. Come on, writer of Hebrews! I mean, this is a silly exercise in mental gymnastics.

Jeff: Yes, sure.

Participant: So I just wonder if they got it, because Hebrews is a tough book.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: I think that those who would not get it are thinking that the Bible was only written for them and about them. And what is impressive to me about Genesis 15 is that after the sacrifice and after Abram wakes up, God tells him, “Hey! I’m going to take your people and your offspring, and they’ll be down in Egypt for 400 years.” And what jumped out at me about the twentieth time I read that is that “you’re going to be there 400 years because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” In other words, “Hey, there’s this huge plan I have. And Abraham, here’s how you’re fitting intuit.” But for all

“By a New and Living Way”

of these other people, this is not some little deal about you or me. It’s all about God’s glory.

Second Participant: That’s good.

Jeff: Yes, and I’m glad you bring that up, because this is a great segway into what I want to say next. If you think about the contrast between Genesis 15:12 where he goes into darkness, dreadful and great darkness, right?

Participant: Dreadful darkness.

Jeff: Right. And then in Hebrews 10:22, where we’re supposed to draw near in full assurance to God, what’s the difference? The difference is that at this stage in the exfoliation of the covenant of grace the people of God are going to go into captivity. But you, at the very capstone of the covenant of grace in Christ, experience freedom and fullness. It’s a striking contrast, even when you just compare the text like that. And so I’m going to just skip that last slide and go to *the pattern*.

Let’s go to the pattern. Let me talk to you about this for just a second. I want you to know that I said to you that you could actually divide what we just looked at from what we’re going to look at. And you can divide it because what we looked at is really theological and Biblical and it’s about substitutionary atonement. But what we’re going to look at is really domestic.

But in one sense I don’t want to divide them, because the substitutionary stuff that we just studied actually leads to some very practical stuff. And you know, one of the things that I think is really rich in the Scriptures is that Paul often, if not always, uses theology in service of the practical. So in Philippians chapter 2 the great Christological statements about Christ in those verses are simply to serve his statement that you too are to have this mind in you which was in Christ.

Participant: Right.

Jeff: And so theology serves the practical. So I want what we just looked at to serve what we’re going to look at, and it’s practical. And it’s domestic. Calvin of “Calvin and Hobbes” says, “I refuse to take out the garbage, and I have the right to do whatever I want all the time.”

And his dad says, “No you don’t.”

Calvin says, “I don’t?” (*Laughter*) Calvin is dragging out the trash in the last frame and he says, “Well, it sure ought to be a right.” I love it! (*Laughter*) I love that as long as it’s not my children saying that. (*Laughter*)

Anyway, if you don’t like that one, how about this one? I love this! He says to his mom who is vacuuming, “Can I run the vacuum cleaner?”

Mom says, “No, not until you’re older.”

“I’m old enough; I can do it.”

His mom says, “Well maybe just this once, if you do a really good job.” And then Calvin is looking at his mom while he’s holding the vacuum cleaner and he says, “That suppressed smile worries me.” (*Laughter*) I love it!

Anyway, what we find is, we find that this substitutionary atonement brings those for whom Christ substituted Himself into a new family context. And one of the things that you realize is that within the house in which we now live that there are household rules.

“By a New and Living Way”

There are chores that we have to do. And I just want us to walk through a couple of these things and see that manifest in the text.

But as we do that, I want you to understand something else. I want you to understand that life in a house is only a burden to the rebel who doesn't want to live in the house. And I say this really directly, because I know it to be true personally and existentially. And I know it to be true in other people as I've tried to pastor them. And that's this. People are happy in the house of God, and the yoke is easy and the burden is light, as long as they're not entrenched in sin that's leading them away from the house.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Once somebody gets entrenched in sin, all of a sudden they begin to question God, the Master of the house, and God's rules and stipulations and things like that. And now, all of a sudden, they're a burden. They're not so light anymore, not light as they once were.

And I think that one of the things that we need to always remind ourselves of is this. If I'm feeling like the house rules are tough on me, maybe the problem is that my affections are being drawn elsewhere. And if my affections are being drawn elsewhere, then maybe I need to repent of some sin. I think that's crucial. I think that's really crucial.

For instance, one of the things that I think you're going to find is this. It says that we must associate with the family. The word *associate* means *to come together and visit*. And if the coming together with God's house becomes a burden, well then the question is what's happening in me that has made these gatherings a burden on me? That's a question that I think we have to ask ourselves.

But not only that. He says that we need to come *“with full assurance.”* Now what is the meaning of this? I think You can go one of two ways. You can either understand him to be saying, well, we need to be sure of faith's foundation. In other words, faith's foundation is the gospel. And we need to be assured of the gospel.

Now it's one thing to be assured of the foundation of the faith, the gospel itself. But it's another thing to be assured of my response to the gospel, because that's subjective. Can I ever be 100% assured of my response to the gospel?

Now somebody may look at that and say, you know what? I don't know how you can be, because we're told in the infallible Scriptures that the gospel is a solid foundation. But nowhere in the Scriptures does it say that Jeff believes that. That comes from my own believing.

Now which is he talking about? Is he talking about the objective gospel revealed in the Scriptures? Is that what I'm to be fully assured of? Or is he talking about my subjective faith response to that gospel? Well, I think he's talking about both/and. Especially as a believer, I don't think you can separate the two. And I've given you this illustration before. But I'll probably give this illustration at least ten times a year until I die, because I'm ministering to myself as I minister to others with it.

There were two 20th-century theologians. One of them was Robert Dabney and the other one was a man by the name of Robert Vaughan. And Dabney was dying. And he wrote to Vaughan who was his friend who said, “You know, I'm struggling as I come to the latter part of my life.”

“By a New and Living Way”

And Vaughan wrote back to him a letter, wherein he said to his friend, “Bob, let me ask you a question. If you were walking through the woods and you came across a bridge, Bob, let me ask you. Would you stand looking at the bridge asking yourself, ‘Do I trust enough in bridges to cross this particular bridge?’” Hence, the subjective aspect of faith.

“Or, Bob, would you go to that bridge and would you examine that bridge? Would you examine its joints and the lumber that was used? Would you look that bridge over and find it worthy, trustworthy to cross?” That’s the objectivity of the gospel.

He said, “Bob, go to the bridge and look at the bridge and find it trustworthy to cross. And then, Bob, cross the bridge.”

And what is he doing? He’s telling his friend to engage in both aspects, the study of the objectivity of the gospel, putting your faith in that which is revealed infallibly in the Scriptures. And Bob, believe it! Believe it! And so put your faith in it.

So I think that’s what he’s talking about. So when we enter into the family of God, we’re not only to associate with others, but we are also to engage in coming to this family and to the Father of this family in full assurance of faith. And that produces then a new confession.

You know, I’ve said this to you before. When you confess something, you speak it in agreement. Not only are you agreeing with God about what He says about Himself, but you’re agreeing with others in the family of faith. And that’s what a confession is when you think about it.

The problem is that sin has its way with us and affects what we sometimes confess to be true. And that’s what I was telling you earlier. One of the things that you need to ask yourself when you begin to doubt God and begin to doubt the things that the Bible says about God, and so on, is that you need to ask yourself this. Is there a problem with God or is there a problem with me? And nine chances—no, ten chances out of ten, (*laughter*), the problem will be with you.

Participant: It’s this body.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. And then there’s *a new pattern of speech*. Notice this. We need to stir one another up. That word is used two other times in the New Testament, and in two other places it’s used negatively. One of those places is when Paul and Mark have a violent disagreement. They stir one another up all right, but it’s not to love and good deeds. It’s to division.

And I think that here is a word that doesn’t have to have a negative meaning, but can have a negative meaning, and is used here in a positive way, but with just as much vigor. In other words, think about it. When we go to church, I don’t know about you. But when you go to church, why not go to that person that you know is struggling and say, “Brother, how are you? How are you today? What do you need from me? Have you been faithful this past week? What do you need from me to be faithful next week? What are you thinking? Are you in disagreement with God these days? Have you forsaken the midweek gathering? What’s going on with you? How does your wife feel about where you are? Has she noticed a difference?” Why not these hard questions where we actually stir one another up so that we can stir up faithfulness in one another?

“By a New and Living Way”

And the Hebrews needed to be stirred up. And the thing that I think is really striking is this, and I want to jump to this. In Hebrews 12:4-5, this is what the Preacher asks the Hebrews. *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?”*

Now I want you to think about that in light of what we just said. Christ’s body was torn asunder. He resisted sin to the shedding of His own blood for us. And now the question is flipped back on us in chapter 12. As you seek to be faithful not to save yourselves, but as you seek to be faithful to the One whose blood was shed for you, have you really resisted the sin that easily encroaches in your life, that so easily entangles, to the point of shedding your own blood? I think not. So remember God’s disciplinary actions when He raises His hand to you, because He does it as a Father, because you’re now in a family.

And I think that’s the idea. And so I think that we need to think about being found in the house, agreeing with the Father of the house, and we need to be found stirring up our siblings to greater love and good works because of where we are. We’re in the house. So any questions about that? Yes, please.

Participant: Those questions that you were just previously asking and that we should be asking other people, I can’t see any definitive examples. But it just seems to me from general observation, even within the church, that somehow those questions are very detrimental and harmful to the individual.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: That’s the impression I’m getting in our culture today. And you can’t say something like that because it might lead them in a wrong direction or hurt them or hurt their feelings, or whatever. And I can’t give you that particular example. But generally speaking, that’s what I’ve seen.

Jeff: You know, I think you’re right. I had a friend of mine buy a book for me by Bob Goff called *Love Does*. Has anybody read that book, *Love Does*? I just finished it yesterday. And it’s really 31 biographical stories. It’s kind of a fun, entertaining biography through this man’s life. And the man had an interesting life. You know, you read these stories and you find out what a failure as a father you are.

Remember when he has his kids write to the leaders of the nations? And then he takes his kids to these countries. And I’m like “Wow, I’m a failure!” (*Laughter*) I never suggested that my kids write the leaders of the nations. Anyway, whatever; I digress.

Anyway, I picked up on a number of things. But one of the things I picked up on in this book was that first of all, it was very entertaining. And the second thing is that this man is afraid to talk about sin. Everything is well, rather than think about God this way, I’d rather think about Him this way. So there’s sort of a removal of the idea of sin from this book. It’s not there. Looked at in its most charitable light, you insert it back in and you say, “I see what he’s saying, as we are now in this family.”

But that’s not what the Bible does. The Bible doesn’t eliminate sin from our vocabulary just because we’re in Christ. It actually says that we need to put that sin to death. So I see that trend as I read that particular book, which is read by a wide audience in the church today.

“By a New and Living Way”

The second thing is that I noticed, in chapter 29, which I strongly disagreed with. He strongly denigrates Bible study. He basically says that Bible study really doesn't help anyone.

Now in all fairness he says that we need to study the Bible. But he says, “I lead a session called a ‘Bible Does’ session. And we get together and we read the bible. And then we ask, what are we going to do about this, or what are we doing about this?”

Well, the only problem I have with that is that oftentimes applications that are divorced from a study of the Scriptures are applications concocted from our own imaginations, and which don't actually arise from the Biblical text.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: And so I think that you need Bible study in order to have Bible application. If you don't have Bible application, if you run into somebody who says, “Well, I never apply the Scriptures; I let the Holy Spirit do that,” that's another matter. And that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about is that genuine application of the Scriptures arises from a study of the Scriptures.

So as I read this book which is widely read in the church, I noticed that there are trends at least in that particular book that I notice in what you're saying. Do you want to follow up on that?

Participant: I don't know why. I'm just making a general observation. And it's frustrating to me. I want to be loving, but I want to be pointed. And I'm finding it difficult to be pointed with people because the culture seems to suggest that that's harmful to people. We shouldn't be doing that.

Jeff: Yes. So here's what you do. You go up to somebody, put your arm around him and squeeze him a couple times, look him right in the eye and say, “I want to be winsome with you, okay? Give me a winsome moment. You're a sinner!” (*Laughter*)

I do think this. I was talking to a friend of mine who teaches in a college. And he told me and he said, “I used to be able to give a bad grade.” He said, “Now when I give a bad grade, I have to go to that student and I have to encourage him, because I've given him a bad grade.” And he said, “You know, that's an element of the job that was never there before.” And I think that fits our culture. You know what I mean? And it fits the culture that we have in the church today pretty well. And that's because the church is in the culture.

And the thing about it is that this is what you have to remember. You have to remember that we're not separate from the world because we go down and buy land in Valise, you know, and we try to build a commune. That's not what the Bible means when it says, “*Come out from among her*”, to come out from among Babylon, right? What it means is that if we live like Christians in the world, there will be a natural difference in us. That doesn't mean that we'll be harsh. That doesn't mean that we'll lack winsomeness. But it does mean, for instance, that in the church the writer of the Hebrews says to stir one another up. You know, you get to the point of agitation for the good of another, right? And you just don't see that. But if you are living the Christian life, you will be different. And people coming into the church will recognize the difference they see in the church and the culture.

“By a New and Living Way”

Do you know what? I’ll tell you this last thing. In the eleven years that I’ve been the pastor of the church I’ve pastored, we’ve had three excommunications. And part of what we do requires that when we excommunicate somebody, we read the pronouncement of excommunication from the pulpit. And every time we’ve excommunicated someone, somebody new has been in the congregation. And they’ve stayed. And two different people at two different times have come to me and said just over the course of time, “The reason why we stayed was because of what you did.”

It shocked us at first. And we were kind of like what is going on here? But after we stayed and realized what was happening here and we heard that, we recognized that this is the place they want to be because of that, it always strikes me as crazy that that would happen.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff is overcome with emotion.

Jeff: Don, go ahead. Hold on just a second, Don.

Participant: If you have time, when you begin your teaching next time, would you begin with the passage, “*and all the more as you see the day growing near?*” It’s eschatological.

Jeff: Yes, definitely.

Don: Jeff, is there any connection between “*not forsaking the assembly*”, as the King James puts it, and “*encouraging one another?*” Because a lot of times, particularly in church discipline cases, people haven’t been attending church. And they’ll cite that, forsaking the assembly.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Is that talking about worship? Is it talking about Christians taking care of one another? Is it both/and?

Jeff: Yes. I think what you have here is that you have a community of believers who are thinking about going back to Judaism. And I think that you are seeing the empty seats because people are thinking about retreating, which is why he talks about that if you draw back, there will be shame that comes upon you. I think that’s in the next section we’re going to look at. The idea is that there were desertions because there were temptations due to this persecution that was afoot. So I think that’s the root of it.

I mean, I think that here is another place where that’s what the text says. The Biblical application to that can be related to that. But it should be related to that. Yes?

Participant: One last comment, Jeff. As you were talking about the objective and subjective, I couldn’t help but think of that phrase in the song where it says, “I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.” It’s all there; it’s a lovely phrase.

Jeff: Yes. I will say this. Let me share this with you. The last excommunication we had was about three years ago. And it was a girl who apostatized from the faith. She walked away from the faith and said that she was an atheist.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff is again overcome with emotion.

Jeff: She was in church last Sunday.

Participant: Amen! (*Applause*)

“By a New and Living Way”

Jeff: She hasn't repented of that yet. But the fact that she is back in church was just I mean, you know,--

Participant: That's great!

Jeff: Yes, it was wonderful. Well, let me pray, and then we'll leave.

Father, thanks for this day. And Lord, thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You for His work on our behalf. Father, as we study Your word, bless us. Strengthen us by that same grace, for we ask it in His name. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause*)