

“Sinai or Zion: To Which Have You Come?”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 12:18-24

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Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are thankful for this day, for the time You’ve given, for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the life that we have in Him. We’re thankful for the Word, the inscripturated Word that is Your word. Father, we’re thankful for it because it’s not just a lifeless Word, but in fact it is a living Word. It’s sharper than any two-edged sword. It’s able to divide bone from marrow and soul and spirit. Father, as we take it up this morning, we expect it to do its work in our lives because it is Your word accompanied by Your Spirit. And Father, we pray that You will indeed use it to shape our lives according to and after the fashion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, as we come we come expectantly. We come knowing that we may experience pain and discomfort. We come knowing that we will experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit. We come expecting whatever You will give to us, and whatever You give we will receive.

Father, as we gather, we pray that Your hand of blessing would be upon the Davis family. We certainly pray that You will strengthen and encourage their hearts. And You already have because of this woman being in Your presence not only before death but certainly after, based upon her profession in Christ. Father, we think also of Bishop Rodgers and ask for his wife Blanche, and pray for them to be strengthened and encouraged, especially Bishop Rodgers. We pray that he’ll be strengthened and so be able to return to us soon. Father, we certainly ask that Your hand would be upon us in blessing. And we pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well, let’s turn to Hebrews chapter 12. And today I want us to look at verses 18-24 of Hebrews chapter 12. And as I have you turn there, I want us to remember that this word is God’s word. And I want you to remember that it is a necessary Word, necessary because of Adam’s fall in the garden. Because it was a necessary Word it’s also a sufficient Word from God, a clear Word, and because it’s from God an authoritative Word. I want you to listen to this, which is God’s word.

“For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given: ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’

“But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” This is God’s word.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

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Jeff: All right. Is that close enough?

Brave Man: For government work.

Sig: This is the word of the Lord.

Jeff: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Don Maurer: Hey, Jeff?

Jeff: Yes?

Don: I wanted to say something. The spell on the piano was broken.

Jeff: Oh, was it?

Don: Yes. I don't know how it happened, but it sounds the same.

Jeff: It sounds the same. For those of you who weren't here earlier, you should have been here earlier. He was playing Aerosmith. *(Laughter)*

Don: No I wasn't. *(Laughter)*

Don: *(singing)* Dream We-eavuh. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. So today I want us to think about three points. I want us to think about an introduction. I want us to think about the introduction, just a couple of points that will help us to get into the text just a little bit. But then the basic meat and potatoes of what we're going to be doing today is to think about *the nature of the Mosaic covenant*, and then to think about *the nature of the New Covenant*.

Now this shouldn't be a surprise to us because one of the things that we've been able to pick up on as we study together is that really the writer to the Hebrews is thinking about two covenants in particular. He's thinking about the Mosaic covenant and he's thinking about the New Covenant. But he's not thinking that these are the only covenants. And I've tried to show that to you as we've gone through the book of Hebrews. But today that's going to come out in a little more striking of a way, because he's going to have us think through this with regard to the two mountains. So we're going to see this again, something we've seen before and then we'll pick it up later. And then I want us to think about the nature of the New Covenant. So those are the things that I want us to notice as we get started.

First of all, I want you to think about a guy by the name of Marcion. And this just kind of gently eases us into this topic this morning. Actually you could pronounce it Martian, but I don't. It always sounds funny, but—

Don: It would be appropriate.

Jeff: It would be appropriate. But Marcion was a guy who was kind of a wealthy fellow. He came into the Roman church about 150. I think it was more like 140 A.D. So he came into the church less than a hundred years after the last apostle dies. And he comes into the church. He gives money to the church. He endears himself to the life of the church. And then he begins to introduce his view of Christianity.

Now his view of Christianity was a little different. His view, for instance, was a view that said that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament was a tyrannical God. He believed in a form of Gnosticism. And so he didn't believe that the God of the Old Testament was a good God. He believed that He was a lesser god.

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But the interesting thing about Marcion is that he is the first that we know of to do a Thomas Jefferson to the Scriptures. (*Laughter*) He forms his own Canon. And the Canon really has nothing of the Old Testament in it. It has edited pieces from some of the Gospels. And it has letters from Paul, but again edited letters. And the reason for this is because he wants to propagate his view of God.

And what he basically said was this. The God of the Old Testament is a tyrannical God, whereas the God of the New Testament is a God of love.

Now where have you heard that before? I want to tell you something. That view is alive and well in our own day. It's alive and well in our own day. In fact, a lot of what Marcion said is alive and well in our own day.

I have a friend of mine who is a Christian music artist, and he wrote a song. He actually developed a CD. He's developed a number of CDs. He actually gave one of these CDs to me and I was listening to the main song. And I'm not going to quote the lyrics just in case you know it. But one of the things that he said in the song was that he just couldn't wait to lay down this body, never to take it up again.

Don Maurer: Oo!

Jeff: Because the body was bad. Now that's a form of Gnosticism, that we've got to get back to the spirit. And another form of Gnosticism is this idea that the God of the Old Testament is a tyrannical God, a mean God, a mean-spirited God. And Jesus is the God of the New Testament, and He's a loving God, and so on, not of the same kind of ilk as the God of the Old Testament. That's alive and well in our own day.

Now what's the point of our text? The point of our text is a contrast of sorts. Now if you think about what I said about Marcion, if you think about it being alive and well in our day, if you were asking somebody for Scriptural support of that kind of Marcionistic thought, you could go to the text we're studying today. Somebody might say, "Well, wait a minute. Jeff, hold on just a second. If you look at this particular text, doesn't this text look like something you just described? Doesn't it look like the God of the Old Testament, the God of Sinai, is a cruel God, a mean God, a God that's threatening? But the God of the New Testament, the God that's revealed at Zion, at least according to this particular passage, well He's a different God. This is the Lord Jesus Christ who came as a fulfillment. This is a different God."

Now you might say that. But if you've been paying attention to the book of Hebrews as we've gone along, you wouldn't say that for very long. Why? Because fear is not the contrast. What is the contrast? Well, the contrast is not that God is a fearful God, because God is terrifying whether He's in the Old Testament or in the New Testament.

Now the question is why? Well, the answer is because God is God, you know? (*Laughter*) I mean, think about that. Look at Hebrews chapter 10 verse 31. This is prior to our text. "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" And if you look at that, he's addressing people who are in the New Covenant. So "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" whether you're in the Old Covenant or whether you're in the New Covenant. Why? Again, because He's God!

The moment we begin to round the edges off of who God is and talk about God as if, well, there's an Old Testament form of God and the New Testament form of God is not

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bad, then what happens is that we get ourselves into trouble because we’ve just departed from Scripture.

Now I simply say this because I want you to understand that when we think about our text, the contrast that we are thinking about is not that the God of the Old Testament is a fearful and a fear-inspiring God and that the God of the New Testament is a God of love and a God of gentleness. That’s not the point of the contrast. But if that’s not the point of contrast, then what is the point of contrast? So that’s what I want us to think about as we move into this text this morning. I want us to think about what the point of contrast actually is.

So in order to do that we need to take out the first point, which is *the nature of the Mosaic covenant*. Now I want you to think about this for just a minute. These people had been abused. They had been publicly mistreated. They had experienced loss at the hands of the world. And that was taking a toll on the church. Remember that Hebrews 10:25 said that there were those who were forsaking the assembly.

Now you have to keep in mind that this wasn’t just absence from church attendance. They were actually not going to the gatherings because they were either thinking about or heading back to, or already in the Jewish gatherings, the synagogues or the temple, depending on where they were. So they were thinking about and actually going back to Judaism. They were not staying with the Christian church.

Now that raises a question in our minds when we think about it, doesn’t it? What is actually the difference? What is the difference between being in the church and going back to Judaism? Well, it’s the difference between two religions or two administrations. In other words, the question was are these people simply leaving one religion and going back to another, leaving Christianity and returning to Judaism, or is there something else going on? Are they leaving one administration and going back to another?

Now I realize that may take some explanation, and that’s what I want us to think about. What do I mean when I say that they are leaving one administration and going back to another? I don’t mean that they’re leaving the Bush administration and going to another,. Right? Then what is it that I mean, that they’re leaving one administration and going to another? And I think the way to understand that is to think about this covenantally.

One important thing that we’re going to be thinking about today is *the administration of the covenant*.

Sig: Wow, those are really nice markers!

Jeff: Thank you, Sig.

Brave Man: I know.

Sig: Thank the men!

Jeff: And thank you, men! (*Laughter*) These markers are wet and moist and workable. (*Laughter*) Thank you for these, for my birthday. (*Laughter*)

All right. So I want you to think about this. I want you to think about what a covenant is first of all. What is a covenant? Now if you’ve memorized *My First Catechism* with the children, it’s an easy answer. And it’s a good answer. But it starts off with a relationship. The children’s catechism says this. “*It’s a relationship that God sets up with us and*

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guarantees by His word.” It’s very simple, very easy and very good. But it’s a relationship.

Now the one thing that you have to understand when you think about a relationship—and this is just by way of analogy to help us to think about the covenant,—a relationship does what? It unfolds over time. You don’t go into your marriage relationship knowing your spouse fully and completely. It’s a relationship that unfolds. In fact, the wonderful thing about a marriage analogy is that it is a covenantal analogy. It’s a covenant that then begins to unfold in different dimensions.

Now I want you to think about this related to this covenant. This covenant with God, or this covenant that God sets up with us, unfolds over time.

Now I want you to think about the twofold covenant structure that we have or that we think about when we think about the covenant of the Scriptures. We think first of all about *the covenant of works*, or *the covenant of creation*. And that covenant of works or that covenant of creation is usually thought to be with Adam. God makes a covenant with Adam. He comes to Adam. He approaches Adam and He says, “Adam, here is the precept that you must obey. If you obey this precept, it’s a promise that you will inherit. If you do not obey the precept, then there’s a penalty that you will reap.” So that’s basically your covenantal structure when you think about it like that, okay?

Now Adam obviously doesn’t keep the covenant with God. And so God approaches him with a new covenant, and that is *the covenant of grace*.

Now when we think about this twofold covenantal pattern, we think about what? We think about *the two-Adam Christology*. The first Adam fails, the second Adam succeeds in keeping this covenant.

Now this is the basic structure. We could go deeper than this. But I just want you to get the structure, because this, (the covenant of works), isn’t really where I want us to land. This, (the covenant of grace), is where I want us to do some thinking this morning so that we can understand the Mosaic covenant.

Now what I want us to do then is just to do a walk-through of the covenants for a minute, okay? Does everybody grab where we are? Yes?

Brave Man: It’s pretty straightforward.

Jeff: Okay. The very first covenant after the fall of Adam is *the covenant with Noah*, the Noahic covenant. Now if you think about this in terms of an illustration, what I want you to think about that I want you to think about the earth. I just drew a circle to symbolize the earth, okay? Now I want you to think about what happened with Noah. With Noah there was a destruction of the earth, almost in a sense a re-creation of the earth. And in fact when God cuts the covenant with Noah, he actually talks about a re-cutting of the covenant, a re-cutting of the covenant of creation. In other words, what God is saying is that though the Fall has occurred, though man’s heart is wicked and sinful and corrupt and evil, and he’s terrible in every part of his being, I am going to preserve the stage that I created and gave to Adam.

And so with the Noahic covenant. And with the Noahic covenant you obviously have the sign of that covenant, which is our sign.

Brave Man: The rainbow.

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Jeff: The rainbow. It’s not someone else’s sign, it’s our sign, okay? Then what is the next covenant?

Don: Abraham.

Jeff: The covenant with Abraham. So when you think about our picture of the world, one of the things that you need to think about is that here is a piece of land there. And you need to think about Abraham and his family being called out upon the stage of redemption. They are the first characters on the stage of redemption.

And Abraham is basically told three things. He’s told, “I’m going to give you land. I’m going to make you a people. And you’re going to be a blessing to the world.” Okay, so the Abrahamic covenant. What’s the sign of the Abrahamic covenant?

Brave Man: Circumcision.

Jeff: Circumcision. I always think that’s funny. Do you know what I mean? Don’t you think that’s funny? I’m going to give you more people than you know what to do with, and we’re going to start by—*(Laughter)* I just find that rather funny. Whatever; let’s move on! *(Laughter)*

Ted: That’s got to be a sobering sound. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. What’s the next covenant?

Jim: Mosaic.

Jeff: The Mosaic covenant. Now think about it. What happens here in Genesis 15? God cuts a covenant with Abram. And He tells him that for 430 years people are going to be in captivity. And then—Yes?

Don Bishop: You used the term *cutting a covenant*. Can you explain that?

Jeff: Yeah, yeah. It’s the spilling of blood to ratify the covenant. And I’ve talked to you about this before, the shedding of the blood of the animals. And Abram was supposed to have walked down the middle of the halves. But it said that God takes upon Himself the obligation of the covenant so that He can earn the blessing of the covenant and give it to Abram. But it’s that cutting of the covenant, the spilling of blood to ratify the covenant.

All right. So now we’ve got the Mosaic covenant. Now it’s the huge story of Joseph that helps us to see how Joseph is going to move the people of God by God’s hand down into the incubator of Egypt, so that they can become a family and then get transported back into the land that was promised to Abraham.

So God takes them out of the land and then puts them back in the land after they’ve become a nation. And when they’re placed in the land God gives them a law to keep as a redeemed people. He says, “I give you a law.” Now we’re going to return to the Mosaic administration. But that’s all I want to say right now. What’s next? What is the next covenant?

Sig: The Davidic.

Jeff: The Davidic covenant. And the Davidic covenant is very parallel to the Mosaic covenant. There’s an added dimension to it. “You’ll have a king set over you,” okay? And that’s in 2 Samuel chapter 7 where that promise is given. Now what’s the next covenant? Does anybody—

Sig: The second Adam.

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Jeff: The New Covenant is the next covenant on the agenda. Now when you think about the New Covenant, what you’re going to think about is the culmination of these covenants.

I want you to think about it. So think about how the New Covenant brings us the King. The New Covenant fulfills the law. The New Covenant gives us the land and the people so that we can be a blessing, not just to Israel but in Matthew 28 to all the nations. And this is carried out on the stage of this world. So the New Covenant is the culminating point of these covenants that precede it. There’s an unfolding going on of this covenant relationship called *the covenant of grace*.

Now that’s what you need to understand when you think about the covenantal framework that we have in the Scriptures. Yes, please.

Ted: Where does the church in the New Covenant receive the land? I mean, I get the others, but where is the land?

Jeff: “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Now therefore go and make disciples.*” Yes. You knew that; you were just asking. *(Laughter)* I know it. Sometimes you just kind of—

Ted: I was trying to—

Jeff: Help me along. *(Laughter)* All right. Now this is the question that we have to ask today. We have to ask this question. *What is the purpose of the Mosaic covenant?*

Now I’ve said a little bit about this. I’ve said to you that well, they’re going into the land. And God gave them the law so that they could obey. They were a redeemed people. He gives them the law so that they could keep it. But they didn’t keep it. They didn’t keep it right from the very beginning. So we have to ask ourselves. Wait a minute. If they’re in the land, not necessarily on the basis of their covenantal obedience, because they didn’t begin keeping the law right from the very start, then what was the purpose of the Mosaic covenant? What was the purpose?

And I’ll tell you what. The New Testament answers that question. But you have to look at it. It’s a little strange. This is Romans 5:14. “*Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who is to come.*”

Now I want you to think about this for a minute. I want you to look at this time line. I’m going to draw Adam here. And then I’m going to draw a line, and I’m going to write the name *Moses* here. And then what I want you to understand is that what this text is saying is that the people living between Adam and Moses, they did not sin in the likeness of Adam. But the people after Moses sinned in the likeness of Adam.

Now what in the world is going on there?

Brave Man: The law?

Jeff: So what we have here is this. Think about what happened with Adam and think about what happened with Moses. Adam is created outside of the garden and placed in the garden and given a law. He is told, “If you keep the law you can stay in the garden. If you break the law, then you’ll be put out.”

Think about Israel. Israel is created outside of the Promised Land, put into the Promised Land, given a law, told that “if you keep the law you can stay in the land. If you

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break the law you’re put out of the land.” And they break the law and they’re put out of the land.

And all of a sudden we realize that the people living between Adam and Moses did not sin in the likeness of Adam. But when the Mosaic administration of the law as given, they now began to sin in the likeness of Adam. That’s what it means.

Now that raises a very important question for us when we think about this. I’m going to jump ahead. *“What then was the purpose of the law?”* What was the purpose of the law? And Romans 5:20 tells us. *“The law came in so that the transgression would increase.”* In other words, I want you to think about it like this. Hermann Ritterbos says that *“the law calls forth sin.”* We know that. Om says, “Don’t get into the cookie jar.” The first thing we’re looking to do is to get into the cookie jar, right? *(Laughter)* The law calls forth sin. We know that. That’s simple, basic. Then listen. The law’s purpose is to make things worse, not better.

In other words, the reason for the Mosaic administration is to highlight the need for the King who would come and fulfill the Old Covenant, who would be a Mediator, a Priest, who would be a Prophet speaking intimacy with God. In other words, the Mosaic covenant enhances or ratchets up our recognition of how much we need the covenantal Mediator who is to come. That’s what the Mosaic administration does. Go ahead.

Ted: Does that mean that the people between Adam and Moses sinned less?

Jeff: What it simply means is they did not sin in the type of Adam’s sin. What it means is that they had Adam’s sin imputed to them. They sinned, but they did not have the covenantal framework that referenced back to Adam. And the reality is that they didn’t have the law given to them as Israel had.

Now it was the case. Remember, this whole thing develops in Romans. Paul says to the Jewish person, (actually he starts with the Gentiles), “You guys are sinful.” And the Jews are going, “yeah, yeah, yeah! Condemn them!”, you know? And so then Paul turns to the Jew. And to the Jew he says, “Now wait a minute. You have the law and you disobey.”

And then the Gentile says, “Yeah,. Condemn them!” Then Paul turns back to the Gentile and says, “Yes, but the law as written upon your heart, and you disobey.” *(Laughter)* So there’s no way out of it.

But the point is that there is a difference in the covenantal administration given to Moses. Yes, Tom?

Tom: What I think is interesting is that when God gives Abraham the covenant, he tells them that they’re going to go down to Egypt for 400 years.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Tom: This is interesting. Because the iniquity of the Moabites is not complete.

Don Maurer: The Amorites.

Tom: The Amorites. You’re right; thanks. So that with the ball and the chain everybody sins. But God is on top of it all.

Jeff: Yes. Everybody sins and everybody is going to be punished for that sin, even those outside of the covenantal community because they sinned in Adam.

Tom: Yes.

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Jeff: But here in this Mosaic administration there is a form imposed upon this group of people for the purpose of helping them to see just how bad they are.

Jim: And wouldn't it also sort of set the stage for Jesus then to fulfill that law?

Jeff: Oh, yes.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: That's right.

Ted: You're getting ahead of the story, Jim. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Thanks a lot, Jim. *(Laughter)* So Jesus fulfills the story. *(Laughter)*

Don Maurer: See you next week. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Actually, Jim, I did want to say that here. But what I'm going to do, what I want to reference back to is simply to say that it's actually all the way back here (Adam.) But when the first characters are brought out onto the stage of redemption after the Noahic covenant, we learn that Abraham is not saved in a different way than we're saved. Galatians chapter 3 says that we are of the faith because we are “*children of Abraham, who is the man of faith.*” So salvation doesn't change in its mode as we go along. It's salvation by faith in the promises of God. And thus we have the imputation of his righteousness to us.

That's basically it. When you think about it, why the Mosaic covenant? What you ought to immediately think about is that it's an administration or an unfolding of the covenant of grace to make things worse so that people understand their need for grace. That's all it is. Do you grab that? All right.

Now let's think about *the New Covenant* for a minute. When we think about the New Covenant we need to think and ask ourselves well, where are we? Are we on Sinai or are we on Zion?

So what is being asked is this. It's not why are you leaving one religion and going to another religion? And are you forsaking that religion in order to go to a safer religion, at least politically speaking? No, what Paul is saying is this. Sorry, what the writer to the Hebrews is saying is this. He's saying, “by leaving the New Covenant, what you're doing is that you're going backwards in administrations. You're going backward into a time when God did not communicate as fully and as clearly or as climactically. That's what you're doing. You're leaving one administration, the fullest and the final administration, and going backwards in the covenantal unfolding of things.” That's what they're doing. So what they're doing is that they're saying, “We don't want the fulfillment of this. We want to live in types and shadows of the past.”

Now what you need to realize is that the writer is going to say a few different things to them. First of all, he's going to say that the reason we experience persecution, and those who are in the earlier part of the administration, the Jews, do not is because there's an already but not yetness to what they're experiencing. In other words, when you think about it, they're not saved yet. They're not climactically saved. They're not saved. But what he does say is this. Remember what he says in Hebrews 12:21. Moses feared.

He says that we may experience persecution and loss and distress in this world as Christians. But there's something that we don't experience. We don't experience what Moses experienced when he trembled with fear.

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Now when did Moses tremble with fear? Well in Deuteronomy, after the golden calf incident, that’s when it says that Moses trembled with fear, in Deuteronomy 9:19. “*I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD.*” That happens after the golden calf.

Why is it that at that moment he fears and trembles? Now I want to tell you why that is. Remember what we’ve been learning in Hebrews. The Mosaic administration was shadows and types, only pointing ahead. But it could never take away sin. Moses feared and trembled because he was the mediator of the covenant. And he knew the weakness of the covenantal administration of which he was a mediator.

There was, in one sense, uncertainty about it. Not uncertainty about the promise of God, but if you’re offering an animal that only looked forward to the One in whom you will have forgiveness of sins, then there’s a sense of fear and trepidation that comes along with that, which characterized the Mosaic administration.

And so why was he afraid? Well, he was afraid because of the inadequacy of the Old Covenant in dealing with God’s anger for sin. That’s why he was afraid.

And yet here’s the wonderful thing. Living in light of the New Covenant we should never have that fear. So even though we’re living in the “already but not yet,” already is enough to care for our fears, because the *already* means that Christ came as the climax of the covenant. Yes, Ted?

Ted: But I fear the Lord.

Jeff: Well, you should. And that’s where we go back to the beginning. And we say that the fear of God ought to be there whether you’re in the Old or in the New. The fear of God ought to be there because He’s God.

Ted: Because of who He is.

Jeff: Because of who He is. But the perfect love of Christ ought to drive out that fear. But I’m not perfect. And that’s why I still fear.

Now this gets into a big discussion. But I’ll tell you this. I actually think that we often talk in our world about not having a servile fear but having a filial fear, as if the two are exactly and entirely separate. And they’re not. Fear is fear. We’re only talking about two aspects.

I want to tell you something. When I was young I had more servile fear for my father. But that fear developed as my relationship with my father developed into a filial fear.

Now I’ve got news for you. Even after I was in my 20s, there was still a little servile fear left hanging in there. (*Laughter*) My dad had being pipes, and I was little! Oooooooh! (*Laughter*) That sort of thing. You know what I mean. That develops.

I mean, if you were to ask my son right now, do you have a servile fear of your dad or a filial fear? He would say, “It’s kind of mixed,” I’m sure. That is probably his answer. And that’s the case, right? So it should be that we have this fear of God, because sometimes we—

Ted: But I think that the fear that we are not to have is the fear that what I’m doing cannot appease God. I have no assurance that it will make things right with God.

Jeff: Say that once more.

Ted: I think that’s what you were saying, because he had no confidence in making the sacrifices.

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Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: So the feat that you had, the feat that no matter what I do I cannot please God, that shouldn’t be Christian fear.

Jeff: Right. Because Christ has satisfied everything I need in order to please God. Yes, Bion?

Bion: So then, in the New Testament how do you separate that idea? How do you match the Old Testament? How do you separate the idea of uncertainty from the fact that they had no idea of their salvation?

Jeff: Yes. Well, so I think that if you came across a genuine believer in the Old Testament, then you would have had an assurance of salvation to a greater degree than I think what you would typically find in the Old Covenant administration. But I do think that experience was conditioned upon the revelation that was given. I’m just going to draw a line that starts lower and keeps moving higher. So for instance, let’s think about this in terms of the unfolding nature of revelation.

If I start down here with Adam in the garden, and if he only has Genesis chapter 3 verse 15 as the promise of the gospel, then his experience, his believing experience, is going to be here in terms of what he knows.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15. *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

Jeff: Jeff: And what he knows informs what he does and how he feels about himself in his relationship with God.

But now let’s go up here to, say, the Psalmist, who obviously has more revelation behind him, a greater experience of God. He has a fuller understanding of His revelation, but not anywhere near what we have up here with the coming of Christ. So this is what I’ve said to you guys before. There’s a sense in which our Christian experience ought to begin where the Psalmist ends, because his experience was conditioned upon the unfolding covenant.

So when you say, “How do we separate that?”, I’d say to you that I’m not sure I’d want to talk about how you would separate it from, say, an Islamic view of the uncertainty of salvation. I think what I would want to say is that when you think about it internally against the unfolding of either of the covenants, one can always trust in the God who cannot lie. But in terms of what that will look like and what my experience will be and all of that sort of thing, in other words the objective for even the Old Testament believer was certain. I think the subjective vacillated a bit. It still does, but hopefully less than it did for the Old Testament believer who was in some sense and at some point maybe trembling along a bit. Does that make sense?

Bion: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. Jim?

Jim: Under Islam their salvation would be through works. That would leave them uncertain. Their God is an arbitrary God. So even their works might not—

Jeff: That’s right. Their God is an arbitrary God.

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Jim: And the believers here, even though they’re taken under Moses, they have the law. But beyond that, I believe there was a faith, right?

Jeff: Abraham knew that God was merciful.

Jim: Righteousness would be at work. It would be totally different from them depending on their works.

Jeff: I think the subjective experience of what that faith entails for that person is really what we’re saying. It left them perhaps with the feeling of not being as assured as we are. Yes, Paul?

Paul: Yes. As somebody who has had conversations with Muslims at Robert Morris, which has an Islamic population from Saudi Arabia, I’ve had extensive conversations with a friend who is a Muslim. And it got to the point where I said to him, “Mohammed, do you believe that your life is a scale and that your good works have to outweigh your bad works?”

And he said, “Yes, I believe that. I pray five times a day. I do all these things as a service. I give to the needy, all these things.”

And I said, “Mohammed, do you believe that God is interested in holiness and wholeheartedly hates sin?”

And he said, “As long as my good works outweigh my bad works.”

And I said, “Mohammed, God is too holy and you are too sinful to overcome that.” And it was hard to get through to him because he placed so much confidence in his own abilities that he couldn’t see that was—

Jeff: Yes, a son of Adam, you know? Matt?

Matt: One thing that strikes me is that human beings are quite adept at creating laws. And so with Christianity in the post-Christian era, as it declines, new religions come up—Black Lives Matter, the Me Too Movement. And they have all these laws. And you need to do this, you need to do that. But they have no room for grace because that is not a natural human inclination. And so Fascism, Communism and to a great degree Islam are all categorized by that.

Jeff: You know, a lot of what we’re saying here can be boiled down to this two-Adam Christology. I mean, you’re either in Adam, as your friend. And so you’re working for it with all your might, or you’re in Christ. And Christ has worked for it on your behalf. And it really boils down to that.

And you know, the world hates Christ and loves Adam. And all you have to do, for instance, is that a couple of weeks ago there was a representative from Pennsylvania, Stephanie Horowitz.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: Remember that? So she prays. Now it wasn’t the most eloquent prayer in the world. It wasn’t the way I would have prayed or you would have prayed had you been given the chance. But if you really looked at what she said, it was kind of straightforward, you know? We need to repent and seek God. Jesus is the only way.

And you know, I did just a little looking after that. And back in 2014 there was an emum who prayed almost the exact same type of thing in the House of Representatives. Nobody batted an eye or said a word. And what’s the difference between her prayer and

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his prayer? One may be eloquence. But that’s not why she was taking the heat. The reason she was taking the heat is because she was invoking the name of Jesus.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: And the world hates Jesus and loves Adam.

Brave Man: Right.

Jeff: Now this is really simple. When you think about it and get down to brass tax, the way we divide up the Bible is how we can discern what’s happening in front of us. The world loves Adam and hates Christ. Yes?

Ted: I think the objection to her prayer is that she ended it by saying that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow. That was considered out of bounds. I mean, it’s true, if you want to say it.

Jeff: Well, the emum didn’t use those words. But essentially he said the same thing in his prayer.

Ted: But it’s interesting with the same kind of conversation I had several months ago with a Jehovah’s Witness that came to my door. It was a husband and wife, and I finally said to them, “Jesus said that you must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.” I said, “Are you perfect?”

She would not answer the question. She kept talking about how she was evolving and getting better. And finally she said, “Well, during the thousand-year reign of Christ we’ll have a chance to improve.”

And I said, “At the end of the thousand years, will you be perfect?” And that really is the issue. And I think that Jehovah’s Witnesses, Muslims and Latter-Day Saints all reject the identity in Christ concept. They just do not believe that Adam’s sin nature is inherited.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: Would a rabbi tremble in fear today, as Moses did?

Ted: Which kind?

Sig: A rabbi today, knowing that his people couldn’t possibly do enough works or obey the commandments or live up to God’s expectation.

Jeff: Well, you know, sometimes the rabbis during Jesus’ day didn’t tremble with fear over that issue, right? They believed that they could achieve enough and do enough. Don?

Don Maurer: I remember that Jonathan Watt a couple years ago said that he went to an Orthodox Jewish worship service. And the rabbi said, “I don’t need a mediator. I have the law.” That doesn’t sound like fear and trembling to me.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: And then the question is are you perfect? In regard to the law are you perfect?

Jeff: Jim, are you pointing over there? Oh, Bion.

Bion: I guess it’s threatening. Everybody supposedly believes in a god, no matter if they think it’s the universe or whether they think it’s a law. *Unclear*) Or whether they think that it’s Someone stronger than you, where you sacrifice to somebody who is stronger. Is that logical?

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Jeff: It’s autonomy, that sort of thing. And you’re asking, is the problem unwillingness to submit to somebody like God who can do that for us versus feeling that we can do that on our own?

Bion: Nobody can make those things up. Nobody needs a God, the God of Christianity.

Jeff: Yes, right. Well, let me simply sum this up. You know, Bion was really young when his folks came to church. I’m shocked; I shouldn’t say this. But it’s so good. He had an evening church schoolteacher who told me that Bion is going to be a theologian.

I said, “Why is that?”

He said, “He can sum up the whole Bible.” How old were you when you said this?

Bion: Probably like six. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: He said, “I can sum up the Bible’s message after Adam in two words: the bite.” *(Laughter)* I love it; that’s great!

All right. So let me just say this really quickly. The basis of our assurance is on the verdict of the Judge. And we see that in the text. And I’m not going to say more than that the spirits of the righteous are righteous because He made them righteous on the basis of His verdict, which really gives us a joyful gathering.

But one thing I want to say is this. What about this is “*better than the blood of Abel?*” And I would simply say that the blood of Christ is better than the blood of Abel. And it’s interesting that he goes all the way back to that early part in Genesis chapter 4 where Abel is slain. It’s better than the blood of Abel because Abel’s blood could only cry out from the ground. The blood of Christ can reconcile. And I think that’s the idea when he talks about “*better than the blood of Abel.*”

And the question then becomes this, and it forces it upon the hearer. Okay, if the blood of Abel could not reconcile, nor can the blood of bulls and goats reconcile, but only the blood of Christ can reconcile, then are you going to stay in the final climactic administration of the covenant of grace? Lord are you going to return to that which cannot reconcile? That’s really the question that I think he’s asking in this particular section.

Okay, let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day. Bless us as we think about these things that are eminently practical to us because they provide for us the assurance of faith that is only found in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bless us in Him, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*