



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 9:1–11

“Eternal Redemption”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the opportunity, again, to look into Thy word. We thank Thee for the great message that is contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews; to have a great High Priest who has offered the sacrifice that avails for our sin and, now, is seated at the right hand of our Father in Heaven, to see that all that he has won by his sacrifice is secured for all of those who believe in him. We are so grateful, Lord, to have an advocate and an intercessor, and one who has been one of us, insofar as he possesses human nature and thus understands us, is able to enter into the trials of human life, and is able to give us deliverance. We thank Thee for all that we have seen in this epistle, which glorifies his name and encourages and comforts us in the experiences of life. We pray Thy blessing upon our evening and the study of the word.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, tonight, we are turning to Hebrews chapter 9 in verse 11 through verse 14, and let me read these verses now. With verse 11, I may make one or two little modifications, but we want to read the passage that we're looking at. “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come.”

Now, we have an instance here of a difference of manuscript evidence; that is, some of the Greek manuscripts have one reading and then we have other Greek manuscripts that have another

and it affects the translation of the text. I read the Authorized Version as “good things to come.” But almost all of the more recent editions of the New Testament, that is the translations, have taken this “good things to come,” as referring to the past because the verbal form that is found there is in the past, so far as time is concerned and so, they would render it something like, “Christ being come an high priest of good things that have come.” If that’s the sense, it means if its good things to come, the author is looking from the standpoint of the Old Testament and looking to the things that our Lord would do, which we now know that he has done. So if you see a slight difference there, that’s the reason for it.

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things that have come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, [or tent] not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

And again, the commentators and the students of the Epistle to the Hebrews argue the validity of the rendering of that last clause, which I read here as “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” For example, today I was reading in one of the most recent commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews, the author argues for not “having obtained,” but “obtaining eternal redemption,” as if to suggest, it would seem, that he must enter into the Holy of Holies, in order to obtain the eternal redemption. However, in my opinion in this case, I rather like this rendering, “Having obtained eternal redemption,” because, I think, of the eternal redemption as having been obtained by what Christ did on the cross and, therefore, the entrance into the Holiest of All, that is, into the presence of God, is a result of the “It is finished,” of Calvary’s cross.

The Greek form may be rendered either way. And so, consequently, it’s a matter of what the reader of the text assumes or thinks that the author is referring to. I think that we should render it, “Having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Now, the expression here, “the eternal Spirit” we’ll discuss later on because again that may be rendered in two different ways. But since we’re going to have to discuss it, I’ll save the discussion of it for when we get to it in the text. The subject for tonight, it seems strange to say ‘tonight’ when it’s fully light outside, this evening, is “Eternal Redemption.”

Now, we said a long time ago that Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse used to like to introduce all of his studies on the Epistle to the Hebrews with, “The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to teach the Hebrews that they should no longer be Hebrews.” And I objected to that because, strictly speaking, the Hebrew believer today is still recognized by the Bible as not only a believer but as a Hebrew believer because the Apostle Paul, you know, says in Romans, “There is remnant, according to the election of grace,” and in the last verse or so of the Epistle to the Galatians, he refers to, “the Israel of God,” which is not a reference to the church, in my opinion, inclusive of Gentiles, but is, rather, a reference to believing Israelites who have not succumbed to the false teaching of the Judaizers, who had been troubling the church in Galatia or the churches in Galatia. So perhaps, it would be a little better to say, “The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to teach the Hebrews that they should no longer be only Hebrews.” That is, they are Hebrew Christians now, as a result of what Christ has done.

We also stressed, back earlier, that the Epistle to the Hebrews could be considered to be an epistle that is grounded in three famous Old Testament passages. In fact, it could be said, four, but we’ll just use three, because they’re probably the three most important. One of them is Psalm 110, in which we have the prophecy by David of a new priesthood that is to come. “The Lord has sworn,

will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.” No priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, had arisen until our Lord Jesus Christ came. And, in fact, no priest could have been such a priest, for he said, “Thou art a priest forever.” That is, an eternal priest.

In our study a couple of weeks ago, we also pointed out that in Jeremiah 31, the writer of this epistle, the prophet, had made reference to the New Covenant, and in this epistle he had made reference to the fact that that particular statement in Jeremiah 31:31 through 34, is one of the statements that is fulfilled in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ because he, himself, is the one who will and has now ratified the New Covenant. So Psalm 110 suggests a new priesthood; Jeremiah 31 suggests that there will be a New Covenant. That prophecy prophesied the covenant after the Mosaic Covenant had already been instituted.

Now, there is one third passage that the author will lay stress upon in chapter 10. He will point out and again citing an Old Testament passage that there is to be a new sacrifice and this new sacrifice will be a sacrifice in which sins are truly taken away.

Now, that citation that he will discuss in the next chapter is from Psalm 40. And so we can sum it up by saying Psalm 110 suggests a new priesthood; Jeremiah 31 a new covenant; and Psalm 40 a new sacrifice.

Now, in chapter 9, he's leading up to the chapter on sacrifice and he's already shown in verses 1 through 10, that the older covenant had a sanctuary and a ritual. That's what we talked about last time. We looked at the first five verses, and there he went over the contents of the Tabernacle. And then in verse 6 through verse 10, he talked about the ceremony itself or the ritual. And he also pointed out, of course, that it was defective. And now, he will go on to prepare us for the unfolding of the significance of the new sacrifice, which, in effect, does away with all of those sacrifices of the Old Testament. They all find their completion in the one sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, he will show the validity of the new sacrifice, right here in verse 11 through verse 14 of chapter 9, he will show the necessity of it in verse 15 through verse 22, and then, beginning at chapter 9 in verse 23 and going through chapter 10 in verse 18, he will expound the finality of that new sacrifice.

So now, we're at the section where he's bringing us forward to the full discussion of the better sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and, especially now, the validity of it. He paints his picture as he does in the Epistle to the Hebrews, primarily, against the ritual of the Day of Atonement, which was typical by contrast and also by comparison, with the final effectual sacrifice.

So we need to bear in mind the Day of Atonement now, and let me suggest, you'll get more out of the ministry of the word if you read Leviticus chapter 16, a couple of times over the next couple of weeks. That's not asking too much, is it? One chapter a week? But, anyway, a couple of you have smiled, the rest of you don't know exactly what I meant. [Laughter] But, that's all right. Read Leviticus chapter 16. If you want to read it three times, that'll be all right too.

Now, he's just then pointed out that the Tabernacle had these things in it and, also, that it did not provide a cleansing of sins as far as the conscience was concerned. He said in verse 10, “Which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washing and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

Now, he's going to talk about the time of reformation; that is, the time when our Lord Jesus has come and the ministry has been brought to its climax. If you think just a moment of Old Testament times, you'll realize that the children of Israel gathered around the Tabernacle were constantly faced with what the Tabernacle taught them. And it taught them, if they thought about it as they should have and many of them did think about it, some did not, of course. If they thought about it they would realize that as they looked at that Tabernacle, they could surmise that entrance into the presence of God and close fellowship with him was forbidden. There was a gate into the Tabernacle into which the priests entered, and the person who was going to offer his sacrifice at the brazen altar, brought his animal there. But entrance into the Holy Place, that is, the first division of

the Tabernacle was open only to the priests. And then, as you know, entrance into the Holy of All, the Holy of Holies, which was behind a veil, was open to only one person, for one day in the year. So as you looked at the Tabernacle, one could have put there outside, “Entrance Verboten, except to the priests.” And then, if there were a sign inside. Aaron didn’t need this, but if there had been a sign inside, “Verboten, except on the Day of Atonement.” So you can see, I think, that what is suggested here is that the Lord God was behind the thick tapestry curtain, and he was a person with whom, personally, fellowship was very, very difficult, according to that which the Tabernacle itself set forth.

He was, in a sense, hidden from the children of Israel because of man’s sin. It should have been a constant reminder of the fact that they were unholy, and their God was a holy God. So three hundred and sixty-four days out of the year, no admission. One day out of the year, admission, but only by one man. Now, that surely should have taught Israel, thinking Israelites, about the nature of the God that they were supposed to be worshipping.

Now, let’s look at the place of the Messiah’s ministry, as it is described. First of all, in verse 11, “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, [or that have come] by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, [and I’m going to make one more change. The “by” now if you have a New International Version or if you have a New American Standard Version or if you have the New Revised Standard Version, you will note that that “by” of the Authorized Version is rendered by the English preposition “through.” And that is correct, in my opinion, so we’ll read it that way.] “But Christ being come an high priest of the good things that have come, through a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.” The good things are ministered from the greater Tabernacle, the heavenly Tabernacle, and the Lord Jesus Christ has come through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, and thus has come to be the High Priest of the good things that have come. So after four thousand years remissions of sins has taken place in the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and access into the presence of God, fifteen hundred years after the hanging of the veil, which shut off everyone but the high priest on one day of the year,

thirty-three years beyond that, after the birth of our Lord, we have now the possibility of entrance into the presence of the Lord God in heaven.

About, I have it in my notes the precise time in nineteen fifty-six, I was attending as a faculty member the Griffith Thomas lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, and the speaker that year was Dr. Kenneth Pike, who was with the Wycliffe Translators, at that time, and Dr. Pike was a well-known linguistics scholar. At one time, I believe, he'd been on the faculty of the University of Michigan and still taught in the universities at either Michigan or Minnesota in the summertime, but spent a great deal of his time with the tribes in Mexico and other places, who were getting the Bible for the first time. And he told some very interesting illustrations and one of them he told has stuck with me through the years. It stuck with me then and I wrote it down and now and then I run across it in my notes.

He was reading a translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he said, to an Indian congregation, a Mexican Indian congregation, and the reason he was reading the translation to them was because this was his translation, and he was wondering if, since their language was a new language to him, he was wondering if they were able to understand the translation that he had just completed. So he was reading it in order to get response from them.

Now, he was in a very priest-ridden area; the Roman Catholic Church there was extremely strong and contrary to the Roman Catholic Church in the bigger cities where they cannot do this, it was a very dangerous place to be. And the priests there didn't mind hitting up on the missionaries every now and then and murdering a few of them. And so it was a very strongly controlled area. And as he was reading through the text, an old Indian, who was listening to him, leaned back and said, “I see it now. They're just trying to prolong their destiny.” Now, what he was talking about were those priests in the area, who were the Roman Catholic priests. And the point that he saw was that he read and understood the Epistle to the Hebrews was that that priesthood, that false priesthood, is not in accordance with Scripture. And, actually, the Old Testament priesthood, too, is no longer the right priesthood. But these people, he saw, by going around acting as priests, were

seeking to stay in office as long as they possibly could as long as they could keep the Bible from the people then, of course, they could do that. That’s really the problem we always have, the problem even in our particular day and age if the people wanted the Bible and read the Bible, the kind of freedoms that we would have in this country would be a great deal different from the limited freedom that we do have. That may seem strange for me to say that but, nevertheless, I believe that that is true. And so “They’re just trying to prolong their destiny.” And Mr. Pike said, “I apologize.” In the priest-ridden area, they got the major message. It’s so plain in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

So the good things that have come. Now, he mentions, also, the greater and more perfect Tabernacle. Now, this greater and more perfect Tabernacle, of course, is the Tabernacle in heaven. So our Lord is come as the high priest of the good things that have come, through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands. This is the Tabernacle in heaven; this is the place where the Father is and the Spirit is and the Son is now. That’s the Tabernacle that he’s talking about. And it was, remember, according to the form of this Tabernacle that the Tabernacle on earth was constructed. Moses was given a pattern and he followed the pattern. So this is the greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands. The Lord Jesus has entered that. So it is not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation. I would imagine that the Lord Jesus, himself, is the source, ultimately, of that expression, “Not made with hands,” because he used that precise expression to speak about the resurrection of himself and the temple, you remember, back in Mark chapter 14 in verse 58. In fact, let me see if I can turn to it quickly and just read the passage. Mark 14:58, and these are the words.

“We heard him say, [the false witnesses were saying] I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.”

And so, I presume, that the author of this epistle, relying even upon the terminology, writes that the temple in heaven that is the Tabernacle in heaven, the more perfect Tabernacle is one not made with hands.

Now, let's turn to verse 12, and here we have the deliverance and the entrance of the Messiah, our great representative, found by himself, eternal redemption, and entered by his own blood. Notice how he puts it, “Neither,” I still say that. I grew up saying, ‘nee-ther,’ ‘ni-ther’ for some of you.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Through his own blood, the living blood, means life. The shed blood is a reference to death. Now, not only is the shed blood a reference to death, but it's a reference to an unnatural or violent death. So when we think of the term ‘blood’ with reference to death, the emphasis is upon the fact that it's an unnatural death and it's a violent death. There are only two ways in which this unnatural blood shedding comes. It can come by malice or it can come by justice. We have the two together in the words “who so sheddeth man's blood by malice, by man shall his blood be shed by justice.”

Now, in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, the malice of men is responsible for his death and the righteousness of God is also responsible for his death; and so that the malice of men and the righteousness of God meet in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was slain, a sacrifice to the evil passions of men, because he resisted under blood, striving against sin. But he was in his slaying the sacrifice of God and the sacrifice was voluntarily accomplished by him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So through his own blood. This is title to enter the Holiest of All. Now, I do not believe that the text teaches that he carried his blood into the Holiest of All. I really don't think that is the teaching of the text. We can say, however, it is his title to entrance into the Holiest of All, what he accomplished on Calvary's Cross.

Now, further, he goes on to say, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once.” Once and for all, that adverb means. He entered once, once not twice, for the veil was rent. O, the heavenly power of the blood of Jesus Christ; power to open heaven, to open the grave and to open heaven and to open heaven for you and for me. Isn’t that marvelous to think about the power of the blood?

Andrew Meyer wrote a little book on the power of the blood, also on the Cross, laying great stress upon that fact. The power of the blood of Jesus Christ is eternal power, power to accomplish the redemption of the people of God for time and forever and to make it possible for us to enter into his presence. And those who have believed in him know something of that now. Most of us who have believed in him don’t know nearly as much, I guess I’m speaking too condemnatory there. There may be some who do understand fully what that means. But, speaking for myself, I still don’t understand what in any great degree the power of the blood has accomplished for me. So he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. Now, in other places, he adds, “for us.” My Authorized Version here has in italics, “for us,” but that’s the sense of it. He has obtained eternal redemption for us.

Now, what does that mean? That means, if he obtained this for us, he acted as our representative. He is our covenantal head. He’s the one who has accomplished it for us, as the one who represents the ones who belong to him, just as Aaron went into that Tabernacle, then went into the Holiest of All, and accomplished the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat, for the twelve tribes, that is, for the people of God. So the Lord Jesus Christ has gone into Heaven, into the presence of God, having shed the blood, and he has done that as our attorney, as our representative.

We know something about that in our life. I.R.S. calls you! What a horrible thought! The I.R.S. calls you and says, “We need to have a little audit.” Now, you businessmen, you’re all so busy making so much money, you haven’t got time to do that, and so, what do you do. You call up your tax representative and you tell him the sad fact. And he says, “That’s all right. I’ll meet with them for you.” In other words, he’s your representative. Now, legally, I think I’m right in this, I’m not all

that used to being audited, they look and say, “There’s no need to audit him. We can’t get anything out of him.” [Laughter]

So at any rate, as I understand it, when your auditor or your attorney or your man who is doing your work for you, when he’s there, you’re there. And he acts for you. So the Lord Jesus has entered into the Holiest of All, for whom? For us, for his believing people.

Now, I want to say, even more than that for his elect people. Those are the ones for whom he stands in the Holiest of All. So he has obtained eternal redemption for us. He has entered into, Mr. Spurgeon likes to expatiate on this a bit, he says, “He has entered into glory with an amazing ‘Eureka, I have found’ upon his lips. Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom for him.” That’s true. So it’s eternal redemption. It’s no new thought. This is the center of the divine plan, the purchase by sacrifice. You cannot expunge that from the word of God; what the salvation of the New Testament is, is the purchase of a body of people, the people of God, by the sacrifice of the Son of God, the God-man.

But now, what about eternal, “Having obtained eternal redemption.” He goes on to talk about some of this later on, but it’s eternal redemption. All the dangers of this life are cared for by what Christ accomplished on Calvary’s Cross. Our redemption is eternal. We don’t have it for a while. We don’t have it until we sin. We don’t have it until we sin mortally. When we have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have an eternal redemption. The ups and downs of this life do not affect, at all, the fact that believers have an eternal redemption. So all the dangers of this life and then, further, all of the years of eternity that lie ahead, we have a representative at the right hand of the throne of God, who constantly lives to make intercession for us. He wants to secure everything that he has won in that costly sacrifice on Calvary’s Cross.

Israel’s redemption was a yearly redemption. It was a redemption which maintained their covenantal relationship for one more year. There would have been a collective sigh by the Israelites when Aaron came out, after he had sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement, if they had entered into a spiritually, they would have all said, “sigh” one more year. One more year!

Well, Israel’s redemption was yearly. But we cannot lose this, unless our Lord is expelled from heaven. And we know, of course, he will never be expelled from heaven. He’ll not be like the first Adam. He’ll not be kicked out of the paradise into which he had been brought as a created being. But in our Lord’s case, the last Adam, because there was no other Adam but him, the last Adam is the Adam that is there forever

So what does that mean? Well, you read through the Bible and what do you read in the Bible. You read about the future. You read about eternal judgment, don’t you? You read a lot about eternal judgment. You read a lot about hell. You read a lot about Gehenna, specifically. In fact, as I remember it, Gehenna occurs in the New Testament fourteen times; and thirteen of the times it’s on the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the other time James mentions it. In other words, hellfire is something that the Lord Jesus has reserved for himself, to warn men about.

Furthermore, we read through the book of Revelation and what do we read there? Well, we read of the great judgments that lie ahead, the great judgments of the seals, the trumpets, the bowl judgments that follow; awful things that are going to come to pass upon the earth. No matter how you read the Bible, even if you do not read it as naturally as I read it, you still cannot help but get the impression horrible things, awful things, are going to transpire upon the face of this earth. We don’t have to fear that. We don’t fear the trumpets. We don’t fear the seals. We don’t fear the bowls. We don’t fear eternal punishment. We have eternal life. We have an eternal redemption and we have no reason to fear. And so we don’t fear now, we don’t fear then. We don’t dread the judgment that is to come, except for our friends who may not have yet come to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There’s a story I have in my notes about an old Indian chief, who was told about the Savior by a missionary. And he said, “Well, this Jesus road that you are talking about is good, but I follow the old Indian road, and I’ve followed it all my life and I’m going to follow it to the end.” A year later, the Indian chief, it so happened, was on the border of death and it so happened, he called for the missionary and said, “Can I turn to the Jesus road now? My road stops here.” [Laughter] Well,

fortunately, our road does not stop. We pass out of time, right into eternity, by virtue of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. So he who has gone before is the one who welcomes us home when we die. That’s comforting. That’s very comforting. And as the years go by you young people in the audience you’ll discover how comforting that is.

Now, verse 13 and verse 14, the author goes on to talk about the surpassing efficacy of Messiah’s offering. The question from the last three words might have been upon his mind. Why is his redemption eternal? Well, the answer, of course, is that it’s in the spiritual realm and not the carnal realm. Sin, death, things like that are things that are eternal facts. Sin is something that extends beyond this life, death also. All of those are great facts of life, itself, that have eternal ramifications. But in verse 13, he says, “For if.” Now, he’s explaining how he has eternal redemption. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats.” Now, bulls and goats, you remember, were offered on the Day of Atonement. Bulls and goats. You remember, the bull for the sin of the high priest; the two goats that were, had to do with Israel’s redemption, one was slain, one sent off into the land that was uninhabited, according to the Authorized Version, “And the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean.”

A very interesting offering, which is introduced here; if a person went out and touched a dead body, he was unclean. That’s interesting, isn’t it? And so he had to offer a certain offering, and the offering was of a heifer and it was the kind of offering that when they had made arrangements for it, they stored up the ashes of the heifer, and it was kept so that an individual who happened to touch a dead body could avail himself of the benefits of the death of the red heifer. The ashes and they were kept for awhile until they were used up. And so he makes reference to this. And, probably, because the Day of Atonement has to do with the guilt of sin, whereas, the offering of the red heifer had to do with the filth of sin suggested by the coming into contact with a dead animal, or something dead. So he says, “The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Now, the spheres of ministry are referred to here in verse 13 and 14, when he says, “For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh.” The ceremonial purification of the flesh by the types of what the Lord Jesus Christ would do. The real cleansing is only done by the anti-type, the Lord Jesus, and his day of atoning work on Calvary’s Cross.

Now, he talks about the superiority of the ministry of our Lord in verse 14 with the, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience form dead works to serve the living God?”

Now, the excellence of our Lord’s work is seen in the contrasts. First of all, note “the blood of bulls and goats,” verse 13, “If the blood of bulls and goats could do so much, how much more the blood of Christ.” “The blood of Christ,” that, of course, is a reference to the violent death; that is something that is absolutely essential because of man’s sins. The wages of sin is death. Isn’t it striking how people find it so difficult to believe that men are sinners when everything about them reflects that great fact? Read the newspapers, look at TV, what do you see? Just a continual unfolding of the sinfulness of the human heart. Not only in those things that are obvious like murder, violence, all of that type of thing, but in our politicians day over day: envy, strife, selfishness. Those are sins too, you know. In fact, those are the nice sins, aren’t they? But they are sins, just the same.

I have an interesting quotation. This was made by Arthur Schlesinger. Many of you know Professor Schlesinger, he’s one of the really, truly outstanding academicians of the past, who has entered into public life as an advisor, from the days of Kennedy on through the democratic presidents because he’s thought of very highly by them. And, probably, in large parts of the United States, he’s regarded as one of the outstanding Academicians and citizens of this country. What would you think that Mr. Schlesinger, who is a Jewish man, would think about Christianity? Let me read something, he wrote this publicly. “There seems to be no inherent obstacle to the gradual advance of Socialism in the United States through a series of New Deals. Official liberalism was the

product of the enlightenment, cross-fertilized with such things as science, bourgeois, complacency and a belief in progress.” That’s good in his mind. That’s all bad in my mind. The enlightenment, which in a sense is an attack on Christianity, but, anyway, he goes on to say, “It dispensed with the absurd Christian myth of sin and damnation, and believed that what short comings man might have were to be redeemed not by Jesus on the Cross, but by the benevolent unfolding of history.” That was written over thirty years ago. “The benevolent unfolding of history,” has not yet unfolded sufficiently for me to see how truthful the professor is. As a matter of fact, I don’t expect it. And, I wonder if he, himself, expects it today? He’s still living and still has a great deal of influence. “How much more shall the blood of Christ?” What a difference between what Professor Schlesinger’s theology and the theology of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

I have a poem here by Henry Sloan Coffin, who was one of the outstanding Protestant ministers a decade or so ago. This is a poem that he expressed sympathy for. “Go, bitter Christ, grim Christ! Haul if Thou wilt Thy bloody cross to Thine own bleak Calvary! When did I bid Thee suffer for my guilt to bind intolerable claims on me? I loathe Thy sacrifice; I am sick of thee.” This is a modernist liberal Christian minister who is say, approving of this.

Isaac Watts, who lived in the seventeenth century and eighteenth century, wrote in one of his hymns, “Not all the blood of beast on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away one’s stain, but Christ, the Heavenly Lamb, took all our sins away, a sacrifice of nobler name, and richer blood than they.” That’s what the author is saying. “How much more should the blood of Christ, who through eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.”

Now, he says, “eternal Spirit.” In my translation, the Authorized Version, the “Spirit” is capitalized. I don’t know whether it’s so in yours. Probably, the majority of the interpreters regard this as a reference to the Holy Spirit; and it may well be. I would not want to speak dogmatically about this. I would like to suggest why, I think, it’s possible that this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit but is a reference to our Lord’s own human spirit. Now, remember, our Lord had a body, he had a soul, he had a spirit. He was a man, such as you and I are men, and he had all of the faculties

of man, apart from sin. So I have no problem with this. But the question is, is this his human spirit or is this the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit?

Now, if what I am suggesting to you is wrong, we haven't lost anything that, except when we get to heaven, we'll have to be corrected. And since I know that I'm going to be corrected on a few other things, I may be corrected on this. But let me tell you why, I think, this is a reference to his own human spirit. In the first place, the term Holy Spirit here does not have the article. That does not prove anything but we've had the article in verse 8, just preceding, “The Holy Spirit this signifying.” So the fact that the article, “the Spirit,” is not found here, makes it possible to render this, “such a spirit” as Holy Spirit, and that could refer to his spirit. In other words, it doesn't necessarily refer to the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, in the offerings in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it's our Lord who offers. In chapter 10, verse 7, “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Our Lord is set forth in Hebrews as the primary offerer of himself.

Thirdly, he's talking about animals in contrast. He says, “The blood of bulls and goats, the ashes of an heifer sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,” according to the Mosaic economy. They had that power. It wasn't eternal power; but it kept them in right standing with the Mosaic Law.

But now, he's talking contrastingly and so the animals offering were irrational. They were involuntary. Anyone knows that animals do not like to be sacrificed. I've told this illustration before, but when I was a kid, thirteen years of age, I went to Wisconsin for a camp for two months, and we stopped in Chicago so that a number of the campers could see the great city of Chicago. And we went to Marshall Fields, which was something we heard about from Alabama in those days. And so we went in Marshall Fields, spent the day there, and I was able to buy something that even my, in all over the South you couldn't buy for about a year and a half after that. Do you know what it was? A yo-yo. Marshall Fields had the first of the yo-yo's. And I still remember getting that yo-yo. Wondering, what in the world do you do with this thing to start with thing? [Laughter] But everybody seemed happy to have it.

And so anyway, while I was there, they took us on a little trip. They took us over to the stockyards. And so we went to the stockyards and I was thirteen years old and it was an experience because we saw the pigs being slain. They all came in on a long, like a long chain or something, and they were hanging by their rear feet and they had them set so that there was a man standing there. He was, all he had was a great big knife in his hand, and as they came by with their necks hanging down, he just went and sliced their neck, like this, one right after the other moving along. He'd stand in one place and he'd kill all day long. He slew those pigs. And they would scream out in their way. What an education I was getting. And then they said, let's go over and see what they do with the cattle. And so we went over to the cattle and they had eight or ten cows that had been given something so that they were asleep. And they were in this pen that was about 15 by 15, and they were lying there. And there was a man who was killing the cows and he had a sledgehammer, and he was just standing up and “thump.” It would just go “thump.” I can still hear it in my mind. Thump. Thump. Thump. So those pigs were not every happy about being on that line. And those cows did not want to be given that particular, whatever they were given, to make them sleep; because they, some maybe even had anticipated what was happening to them, but, nevertheless, the sacrifices of the animals were irrational and they were involuntary.

But what about Christ's sacrifice? Christ's sacrifice was just the opposite. It was rational. It was voluntary. It was the sacrifice that someone has said, “was done with the whole power of his deathless personality.” And so I suggest to you that when it says, “holy spirit,” the reference is to his own holy spirit. They didn't want to die; but they served a purpose. He, because of the great purpose which he served, did it reasonably; knew what was happening, did it voluntarily because of his great love for you; for you Martha, for you Howard, for you Sherman and so on. All of us included there. I may be wrong, but the contrast, it seems to me, elevates the incident.

He says here, “purging your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.”
Purifying the flesh in the case of the animals; purging conscience in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greater defilements are ours, and they are the real ones. And they are the ones that our Lord has cleansed.

And then, he mentions, “from dead works to serve the living God.” “Dead works,” well, we’ve talked about that. Dead works are not the works that bring death. One of the most recent commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews, by William Lane, translates that this way, “The works that bring death.” Now, in my opinion, that’s not quite the point of the text. “Dead works.” Dead works is an expression that was used in chapter 6. Do you remember? Dead works are the Levitical works. They are the works that have no power, really, to bring life. That’s why they are dead. So the dead works are the Levitical works. And so the Lord Jesus has purged our conscience from dead works; that is, from the Levitical system to serve the living God, service contrary to the service in the Levitical ceremonies. That service was not necessarily service in the inner man. A person could live up to the Levitical sacrifices, at least, outwardly, by doing the things that the Levitical ceremony set forth. But our Lord’s work is designed, ultimately, for the service of God to be in the inner man and not simply in ritual.

Redemption’s object is the worship of the Lord God. In the next chapter, he’ll point out its access. In other words, what Christ did, my Christian friend, is to bring you to the place where your life, day by day, is lived in the presence of God. No matter what you’re doing, in the presence of God. That’s what our Lord has sought to bring to pass in your life. And he will do it. He would like to do it now. But he will surely do it, by virtue of the power of the blood that was shed.

You know, in the Old Testament, the priests tried to make that point as teaching because on the Day of Atonement, they were responsible to afflict themselves. And even in the case of, well let me go back to the ordination of the priests they were ordained in such a way that they were to lead Israel into the worship, true spiritual worship of God, through those ceremonies. So the point is that we are to serve the Lord God in a living kind of way, “To serve the living God,” to go on serving him.

Well, I need to close because our time is up. Just a couple of points. First of all, as I mentioned, the benefits of the Day of Atonement and the red heifer only came by personal use. I mentioned that one must afflict himself on the Day of Atonement in Numbers chapter 19, in the chapter that has to do with the offering of the red heifer, the individual had to apply it to himself. Christ's benefits come only by faith.

What is faith? Faith is composed of three things: It's composed of knowledge, assent, trust. Knowledge of what Christ has done, ascent to it, trust in Him who has accomplished that work. The priests honored the blood sprinkled on them by boldly entering the Tabernacle. Have you ever thought about that? When they were ordained to their office, they had blood touched on themselves, washed, certain parts of the body were washed certain parts had blood applied to them. And when they walked into the Holiest of All, when they walked into the Holy Place, they did that by faith. Do you know why? Because God had said, “If unworthy individuals walked in, they would die. If anyone else entered into the Holiest of All, they would die. Even Aaron, if he entered on some other day, would die, would be put to death. So it actually was an honoring of the sprinkled blood for Aaron to carry out his work. It was an act of faith to do that. So we who have eternal redemption, let us honor the Lamb of God, by believing that it gives me the right and the power, for life in the holiest, in the service of the living God.

May God help us as Christians, to have the faith to enter the Lord's presence and serve him. And not only there, but going forth from his holy presence, serve him in the world about us.

It's time for us to close.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word and for the richness of this marvelous letter, we give Thee thanks. Above all, Lord, enable us as those whom our Lord Jesus Christ has represented know what it means to dwell in the holiest by the blood of Jesus. To, by faith, enter Thy presence and seek, by Thy grace, to live there throughout the experiences of our daily lives. We

thank Thee for the confidence and assurance that we have. And, Lord, if there should be someone in our audience who has not believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, O Father, may, at this very moment, they turn to Thee, acknowledge, like that old Indian chief, that their road stops in this life, and does not enter the life that is to come. May they lift their hearts to Thee and say simply, “I thank Thee, Lord, for a High Priest, who has offered an atoning sacrifice and has won eternal redemption by Thy grace, Lord, he becomes my Savior and my High Priest. I believe in Him.”

For Jesus' sake. Amen.