



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 9:15–22; Exodus 24:1–18

“The Mediation of the New Covenant”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we turn again to Thee with appreciation for the word of God and for the marvelous way in which we now have it in our hands. We are able to read it and ponder it, to know that we have a teacher, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the eternal Trinity, to teach us the things that he inspired the prophets and apostles to write. And we thank Thee for the experiences of life in which the word of God has sustained us and helped us and comforted and consoled us. We thank Thee for each one present here. We pray Thy blessing upon our time of studying the word of God. May we be guided into the truth as Thou wouldst have us to hear it and understand it.

We pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, we're turning to Exodus chapter 24, before we look at the passage in Hebrews because the passage in Hebrews is one that contains a quotation from Exodus chapter 24. And so I want to read through the eighteen verses of it and I want you, also, to notice that this is the covenant that is referred to as the first covenant. In other words, when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews talks about a new covenant, he's talking about a new covenant with reference to the old Mosaic Covenant. Now, that is important in understanding the significance of the Law of Moses.

I also wanted to announce to you that I’ve had my Bible rebound. I wore out the New King James Version reading through it and I’m expecting this new, expensive binding I have to improve my teaching. [Laughter] But I’m not asking for comments because I don’t want anyone coming up and saying it didn’t help a bit. [More Laughter]

So I’m back to reading the New King James Version, and we’re reading chapter 24, verse 1 through verse 18. Moses writes.

“Now He said to Moses, ‘Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.’”

Of course, the reason for that is that under the Mosaic age, one could not enter into the presence of God, and so Moses is warned right from the beginning, “Worship from afar.”

“‘And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.’ So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has said we will do.’ And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.’ [How ignorant they were of themselves.] And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words. [The sacrifice, as you can see, was a ratification of that Mosaic Covenant.] Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And

there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank. Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.’ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, ‘Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.’ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”

Now, you can see there were various levels of approach to the Lord God and the people themselves were worshiping from afar. And then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel were closer and they saw the God of Israel. And there is no indication, specifically, of what they saw, but, of course they did not see him in his essence because that produced death. They, undoubtedly, saw some representation of him, but that is as far as we are able to go. And then Moses and others with Joshua went a little closer to the Lord. And, finally, at the end in verse 18, we read, “Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.” And you may remember that when he came down the glory of the Lord shone on his face and the writer of the 2 Corinthian epistle, the Apostle Paul, makes something over that in connection with the Law of Moses, but we don’t have time to go into that tonight.

But let’s turn now to Hebrews 9:15 through 22, and this is the passage in which we have the quotation from Exodus 24. In verse 15 we read.

“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament.”

I must stop here for a moment. Some of you, I’m sure, have covenant but not many of you. It is very, very popular for commentators to take the word *diatheke*, which normally means covenant in the New Testament, and translated it here as testament. And the reason they do that is because we do read a statement here in verse 17, that might suggest that.

“For a testament is in force after men are dead.”

That would suggest a will and then a testament would it not? And so commentators have thought that that is probably the rendering of verse 17 and 16.

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.”

Now, let me stop for just a moment, right at this point in the reading of the Scripture, and say I don’t think that that is correct and I want to tell you why. In the first place, the term *diatheke*, which is used here, never means testament anywhere else in the New Testament. It’s always covenant. And, furthermore, right here in the first reference, in verse 15, “For this reason He is the Mediator of the new.” Well, we’ve already had reference to covenant, and so it’s normal to expect it to have the same sense here. “He is the Mediator of the new covenant.” And even those who translate it testament do not deny that he’s the Mediator of a new covenant. I want you to know how carefully coordinated these verses are with one another. Also in verse 18, “Therefore not even the first covenant.”

Now, no one of these who translate it testament in 16 and 17, translate it testament here. They acknowledge that it means covenant here, and it has the numeral attached to it first. And so we’ve added the term covenant, first covenant, so it’s clear that the first is a covenant, and now we have a new covenant, clearly, in verse 15.

So why change to testament in verses 16 and 17? Now, notice, I was getting ready to say this, but I stopped to point out that covenant is found in verse 15, covenant is found in verse 18, why then since the word is the same, do we give it a different meaning in verses 16 and 17, especially, in the light of what I’ve said about its normal meaning about the sense before and after in this context, especially, when you notice how closely reasoned the argument is?

Let me show you. After he said in verse 15, “He’s the Mediator of the new covenant.” He says in verse 16, “For” to explain. So in other words, verse 16 is connected with the statement of verse 15. “For where there is a,” now, I’m going to translate it, “covenant, there must also of necessity be the death of the covenanter.” “For” again, everything is closely reasoned, with a reason why these sentences are connected with one another. “For a covenant is in force after men are dead since it has no power at all while the covenanter lives. Therefore,” verse 18, “Therefore.” Now, the “Therefore” has to do with the preceding context. “Therefore not even the first.” Now, that would surely indicate that he’s been talking about covenant. “Therefore not even the first” Testament? No. Not even they want to render it that way. “Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.” So we’re going to take it as covenant.

Furthermore, I want to make the point that it’s not necessary for a person who makes a will to die before his will is a will. A will does not become a will when a person dies. Now, I happen to have a will. It’s in my bank and in a safety deposit box. But it’s a will. It’s a will, now. It’s not executed yet. It will be, soon, but nevertheless, it’s not yet being carried out. A will is a will the moment that it’s written and signed. That’s a will. So we don’t need the death of someone. Furthermore, in ancient times and even in modern times, there is such a thing as the distribution of certain things in a will, *inter vivos*, that is, between those who are living. So there is a legal possibility

of the distribution of assets before a person dies, which are mentioned in the will. So the whole idea that there must be a death and, therefore, a testament, in this instance does not hold water. I'll offend a lot of people when I say that because if you just think about it for a moment and if you have one of these versions you have the Revised Standard Version. If you have the New English Bible, if you have the Jerusalem Bible, if you have Today's English Version and if you have the New International Version, my name is one of the translators, I didn't work on this particular chapter because I would have argued strongly when we got to this passage, about it, because I taught Hebrews for many years and this was my conviction many years ago. It's even more my conviction now because recent research has justified that fact. And the latest commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in depth, has confirmed just what I've said here. I was very pleased to read that when I read that in the commentary.

And so we're taking it as covenant. We're not going to talk about testament, we're going to talk about covenant. So let me finish reading in verse 19.

“For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’”

Have you heard that before? Well, you have, because it was in Exodus chapter 24, from which that is taken.

“Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood and without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

Now, we have made references to typology, off and on, through the Epistle to the Hebrews because the author uses the principle of typology. Typology is grounded in the fact that the God referred to in the Old Testament is the same God referred to in the New Testament. And since he's the same God, he acts according to the same principles. He acts according to those principles in ancient times; he acts according to those principles in New Testament times; he acts according to those principles today, for that matter. So we have said that in typology, we have historicity. It's not like Bunyan's allegory. We're talking about historical things. And we have correspondence, that is, the actions correspond in some significant way concerning the work of the Lord God. So here we come to another place where we have typology. The language of Hebrews identifying the weakness of his readers, the author attributes it to ignorance of the first principles of the oracles of God. Remember, chapter 6 in verse 1 and verse 2?

One well-known commentator, who's written some very significant works, commented on typology in his day, which was a few generations ago, as being “almost entirely neglected in our day.” But he said, “We look forward to the time when it will become significant and important in the future, again.”

Well, we're not going to neglect it. There is a revival of typology today among scholars, who are not necessarily believers in the inspiration of Scripture, but they understand that you cannot understand what these men are saying if you don't realize that they believed in typology. So even though some of these people do not underline any interest in typology at all, they do say if you are going to understand the Bible you must understand that the writers of Scripture believed in typology. And so I believe in typology. Now, I imagine most of you in this audience would follow the ones who wrote the Scriptures rather than the latest things that New Testament and Old Testament scholars are saying because they are changeable, and the one who wrote the Scriptures is immutable.

Now, the author has been talking about the ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the Old Testament pictures and I have made mention of the fact that priesthood is one of the significant things that he discusses. And then covenant is one significant thing that he discusses. He discussed

priesthood in chapter 7; he discussed covenant in chapter 8; and he'll not necessarily drop those things but now he's coming to something very significant for that covenant. And so the topic now will be sacrifice. And he will not finish with the topic of sacrifice, in emphasis, until he reaches chapter 10 in verse 18. So from now on through chapter 10 in verse 18, the great theme of the author will be the sacrifice. The sacrifice, of course, that the priest must make in order that the covenant may be ratified and in order that there may be a priesthood by which individuals are brought to the knowledge of the Lord and, ultimately, to perfection.

So sacrifice, now, is the important theme. He's already mentioned it in verse 11 through verse 14. There he discussed the validity of it. He says, for example, well in discussing it, he has discussed the sanctuary and the ritual. And he's said, of course, there is the sanctuary in the Old Testament, the tabernacle and it was defective. But there is a better sanctuary, and he has mentioned that in the first part of chapter 9. But there is a better sacrifice, also, that will be offered. The better sanctuary, of course, is heaven itself, through which the Lord has passed. Do you remember? He said that in verse 11. “But Christ came as a high priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle,” or through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, “not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” So he has compared the tabernacle in Moses' time and in Israel's history to the tabernacle in Heaven, which as you may remember Moses was given a picture of by the Lord God, a sight of, when he constructed the first tabernacle because he constructed it according to that which he had seen of the tabernacle in heaven. But there is a tabernacle in heaven, the author says, and that tabernacle we are to think of as the presence of God, I believe.

So there is a better sanctuary and there is, of course, a better sacrifice and he has talked, I say, about the validity of it in verses 11 through 14. Verse 14, especially, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

Now, in the verses we are looking at tonight, this is a rather lengthy introduction. I’ve gone twenty-one and a half minutes. Here he will talk about the necessity of that sacrifice. And then from verse 23 through chapter 10, verse 18, the finality of it.

So now the necessity of that sacrifice and we begin with verse 15, the efficacy of that blood sacrifice of Christ, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of a new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.” That’s the Mosaic covenant, “That those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

For this cause? Well, for what cause? When you read the Bible, remember, when you read something like this, “For this reason?” You want to ask the question, “Well, what reason?” Well, notice what he’s just said. “How much more will the blood of Christ who offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. And for this reason,” that is because of the surpassing value of that sacrifice that Christ offered, “He is the Mediator of a new covenant” or new testament.

Now, I need to also point out some of the things that are not true that are often said. There a kind of a silly expression sometimes Bible teachers have made. “Jesus Christ when He was on earth reaffirmed the Ten Commandments,” as if that’s the work of our Lord when he was here upon the earth to reconfirm the Ten Commandments. Luther once made the statement, “Jesus Christ is no Moses.” And, of course, he was right. He is no Moses. And he didn’t come, simply, to reaffirm the Ten Commandments. He came far more, fundamentally, to accomplish the atoning work, and you can see, for this reason, because of what he’s done, he’s the Mediator of a new covenant.

Now, “new covenant,” what an interesting thing that is? New Covenant? Well, a covenant, if you’ll think of the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant, there are certain things about these covenants that are very significant. Those three covenants are three unconditional covenants.

Now, what do we mean when we say an unconditional covenant? We mean that God promises to do something which he will in his sovereignty bring to pass. Now, if you say, “Well,

aren't we to do something?" Well, yes, the covenant is for people who are in a certain status or relationship before him. But fundamental to that is the fact that they are in that status before him because of what God does for them. So the covenants, these three are covenants that have unconditional promises; they don't depend on us, ultimately, in any way. They depend upon the Lord God, ultimately.

Now, if you say, "Don't we have to believe?" Yes, we have to believe. The promises are for believers but the Bible goes on to say that the only reason we believe, can believe, and is because God works in our hearts to bring us to faith. Do you get the point? Uh-oh, I wasn't supposed to say that. Martha told me this past week more than once, you've been saying, "Do you get that?" too much. I take it back. Has that fallen within the comprehension of your mind [Laughter] or something like that.

So faith, itself, is the gift of God. We know that from Ephesians 2:8 and 9 and other passages in the New Testament. Augustine spent many, many treatises on that very point arguing with the Semi-Pelagians. If you think that faith is the product of your life, you belong with the Semi-Pelagians. That's exactly the position that Augustine spoke so strongly against. Faith is something we originate. It's not. God originates it within our hearts. "No man can come to Me," the Lord Jesus said, "except the Father which has sent me draw him." That is, bring him to faith.

So, unconditional promises. These three covenants contain the Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, the New Covenant. The blessings are guaranteed by the Lord God. So what we have then is a covenant, an unconditional covenant, this one, the New Covenant. We know that there's one original covenant that the Bible only alludes to, incidentally, in a few places.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer in his Systematic Theology makes several references to it, and he says something like this. He said, "There isn't a text that says the covenant of redemption," which is the term theologians have used of that covenant made between the persons of the Trinity in ages past. And Dr. Chafer rightly says that there is no specific statement in Scripture that says the covenant of redemption. But he said, "It's demanded by other statements that are made in the word

of God like the promise of life and various things like that.” So we’re taking that as a legitimate expression, the covenant of redemption. It’s one of those expressions not found in the Bible, but it is taught in the Bible by a number of different factors. And so when we talk about the covenant of redemption, we are talking about the agreement between the persons of the Trinity that specifically said, in the incidental way in the New Testament in more than one place, that the Father carried out a certain responsibility, the Son carries out a certain responsibility, the Holy Spirit carries out a certain responsibility; and they have arranged this from eternity past because they belong to the eternal councils of the Lord God.

Now, the New Covenant is within those eternal councils because it has to do with the redemption of men. So we can just imagine the arrangement of the plan of salvation within the persons of the Trinity, each agreeing solemnly and pledging by the oath of the Father because we know that the promises of the New Covenant are promises, are the guarantee by his oath that he would give the Son a multitude of individuals that no man could number, and that the Son having the power to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord, would do just that. Our Lord prays that in John 17, when he prays to the Father, he thanks the Father for what he has done, and for giving him the redeemed. And he thanks him for the authority to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord, so that there is a whole procedure and plan worked out whereby God the Father elects, gives to the Son, the Son gives to them eternal life, they become the spouse of the Lord Jesus Christ and form the body of the redeemed. They are in a sense the precious jewels of the Triune God and, especially, of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, in order to carry out all of this, it was necessary for the Son of God to come and carry out the atoning, redeeming work. And this is part of what we are reading here when we read, “For this reason He is the Mediator of a new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.” In other words, the Lord Jesus must come and must carry out the fundamental sacrifice that will bring into application, ratification, all of the principles and promises of the covenantal program of God. How much hinged upon the obedience of the Son of

God to the will of the Father, my destiny, your destiny, the destiny of the whole of the redeemed, who as the writer of the book of Revelation says, “Are so many that no man can number them.” Think of the burden upon the shoulders of our Lord as he carried out his atoning work. One false thought would have destroyed the whole divine program. But our Lord, since he is the second person of the Trinity, we are not surprised, of course, that he was able to carry this great thing out. So by means of a death, no one could ever illustrate perfectly the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but there is an illustration of sacrificial love, I’d like to relate to you because in some sense, it’s very much like him. There is a parallel, let’s say.

William of Orange, who was afterwards King William III, was seized with the same fatal malady, smallpox, which had destroyed both his father and his mother in the prime of their lives. And the eruption was such a severe one that he was unable to throw it off, physically. The physicians declared if some healthy person, who had not had the disease, would enter the bed of William of Orange and hold him in his arms for some time that the warmth might cause the pustules to appear and thus preserve the hope of the country. And that was announced and it produced the greatest consternation among the attendants of the prince. Even those who had had the smallpox were naturally terrified at encountering the infection at its most virulent state; for the physicians acknowledged that the experiment might be fatal. But one of the pages of the Prince of Orange, which, he was at that time not King William III at that time, who was eminently handsome, resolved to venture his safety for the life of his master and volunteered to be the subject of the experiment, which when tried was completely successful. But the man, who later came to be known as Lord Bentinck, imbibed the confluent smallpox, narrowly escaped with his life, and his handsome face was marred by his fidelity, but for many years he became William’s favorite and Prime Minister.

What an interesting human illustration of a person who gave himself for his master and as a result suffered the evidence of the smallpox for the rest of his life. When you think of our Lord, who did what is, of course, the real thing bore our penalty and the marks of the wounds in his side remind us of the fact of what he has done for us.

Well, our author says, “By means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant.” That’s an interesting expression because you know if you think about it for a moment, if you let this fall within the comprehension of your minds, then you may have pondered the fact that if there has been no redemption of the transgressions, no payment of the debt, how puzzled must the Old Testament saints have been when they read that God was a holy God, and they saw generations of sinners come and then, as they themselves passed off the scene, others saw the same thing. And the history of the Old Testament is the history of sinning men. There might have risen the question, does God really punish sin? He says he punishes it eternally, but is there any evidence of just such a thing?

So you can see, for those who really thought about spiritual things that would have been a serious problem. In fact, the spectacle presented to mankind might have seemed to them a continual scandal because the whole moral universe didn’t seem to stand on solid ground since sin was not really being punished.

Now, we, of course, we look back and we can give a ready answer to it. But the Old Testament saints had problems with it. And you read some of the Psalms like 73, and you’ll note that that was one of the things that they puzzled about. Why is it that the wicked are prospering so, and those who are believers are not prospering at all but we are suffering? And one might even reason that way today, to some extent, although now having the Bible, we have an understanding. But then, men sinned here below and yet they lived. They sinned on and yet reached in safety an hoary old age like I am. Where were the wages of sin, they might have said. Well here we have the divine answer, finally. “He’s the Mediator of the new covenant by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.” In other words, our Lord came to die not simply for our sins but specifically in this case, writing to the people that our author wrote, that he came to die for the redemption of those sins under the first covenant, under the Mosaic Covenant sins of Moses, sins of Aaron, sins of all of those individuals. He came to die for them. Of course, he came to die for a broader number but, nevertheless, them, for those who had sinned under the first

covenant. “That those who are called,” called? Yes, called. Effectually called. Effectually called by the grace of God. Those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. So they are called. They are those who have the eternal inheritance.

Now, of course, you’ve listened to me enough, you people in the auditorium, most of you know enough to know what I say about the people of God; that they are a definite number, that they are found in the mind of God in eternity past, they, ultimately, come into this existence and they are, ultimately, called according to the purpose of God and brought to the knowledge of the Lord God. He passes by others. We do not think of the “called” as being a little number.

All of these stories about so and so who got to heaven and he’s walking around heaven and he says, “Who’s that over there?” And they said, “Well, that’s that little company of people over there who were Baptists. They think they’re the only ones here.” And then, “Over here are the Methodists and over here are the Presbyterians and over there are the people from Believers Chapel and they think they’re the only ones here, too.” All of that kind of illustration is an unveiling of the ignorance of what the Bible says because the Bible says that the number of the redeemed is so many that they cannot be numbered. And, yet, at the same time, it refers to the “called,” and not everyone is called. Our Lord says that. So how do we put these things together? We acknowledge that some are called and others are not. At the same time, we don’t say they are small; a vast number and no one can number them, the called.

John McNeil, who was a Presbyterian Evangelist, used to like to say, this is not scriptural but it’s cute anyway, he used to say, because he had to deal with election a lot, when he was questioned about election, “Preach the gospel to all sinners and if you get somebody to heaven that God didn’t elect, he’ll forgive you, for he loves sinners.” [Laughter] Well, that’s not scriptural but it’s cute. [More laughter] And maybe we can say, “If you get someone to heaven that you didn’t think was elect that will please God.” We don’t know who the elect are and so, consequently, we cannot say, “He’s elect,” or “He’s not elect.” We can say if they’ve uttered certain things that are utterly

unscriptural, concerning the way of salvation that they are not elect not. But whether they will be an elect person before they die, that’s another matter.

It’s amazing how much is in Hebrews, isn’t it? All right, let’s go on now. We want to talk about. Oh, one thing I should point out. I think it’s very important that you, who are believers in Christ, should realize that what we are talking about is not simply theology. I know that I’m often accused of emphasizing theology. I take it as a complement, frankly. But, nevertheless, I am accused of emphasizing theology and I’m glad I do because I don’t think that one can talk biblically unless he talks theologically. Everything that has to do with the word of God is theology. The Bible is a book of theological propositions. You know, it starts out, Genesis 1:1, the first proposition and so on, through the Bible.

One can, of course, overemphasize that kind of truth and forget the fact that the Bible has a very practical relationship to the experiences of life, the experiences that we have every day. For example, one day we are happy; three days later we are downcast. One day everything seems wonderful; a week or two later things don’t seem to be wonderful at all. One day we don’t seem to have any problems; and the next day or two or a month or a year, we’re having big problems. These are the characteristic experiences of believers. And so we shouldn’t be surprised that one day we’re happy and then we may be downcast later on, but let us remember that the covenant, the covenant, the New Covenant has not changed. And whether we are experiencing things that are not pleasant or whether we are experiencing things that are pleasant, our relationship to the Lord God is stable, always stable, and there is a release and a time coming when we will understand that if we don’t understand that till now. Tomorrow you may be in the depths of despair. Today you are singing on the top of the mountain. But the covenant doesn’t change because you are not happy. Just remember that. I think that’s very important.

I, by the way, I have something written out here. I said, “You may be as low as a slug in the shrubbery,” [Laughter] I don’t know where I got that or whether I even thought it up. It’s in my

writing. But, nevertheless, that’s precisely what you may be, figuratively speaking. [More laughter] I don’t want to be there myself.

So let’s move on now to verse 16 through verse 21, “For where there is a covenant, there must also of necessity be the death of the covenanter.” Now, here we raised the question of the blood of Christ, as explained by the death. We still find in the Christian Church shame over the term blood. Now, I can understand something of that because blood is not a very happy thing to think about. You, naturally, shudder at seeing blood. Take a little child, for example, and a little child hurts him or herself and begins to bleed, the little child is upset by it, and mother and father are very much upset about it, too. Go back all the way back to the beginning of the Bible and, I think, that’s probably the reaction of all from the beginning. When people see warm blood flowing out of somebody’s body then we shudder over that. And that’s God’s way, incidentally, of letting us know that blood flowing suggests death, which is the penalty for human sin. I can just imagine that Adam and Eve, who were given information concerning the way by which they were to approach God, when the first animal was slain before Cain and Able had had their altercation, when the first animal was slain, perhaps when God slew the animal in order to cover them with skins or afterwards when they made the first initial sacrifices, the shedding of blood would have provoked horror. It’s intended to. It’s to remind us of our sin and the judgment of it. And, I know, that when Cain slew Able that was a horrifying thing to Adam and Eve. And it suggested to them judgment; this case judgment carried out by someone who should not have carried it out. So blood, death, go together and they go together with reference to sin. The author gives the human illustration, “Where there is a covenant, there must also of necessity be the death of the covenanter. For a covenant is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the covenanter lives.” Covenants can be changed. And, as a matter of fact, that’s the way the Apostle Paul argues in Galatians, chapter 3.

Now, the human illustration is in verses 16 and 17, but the divine teaching follows verse 18 through verse 21, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law,

he took the blood of calves and goats with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people.”

Now, that’s Exodus 24, that we read beforehand, where the sacrifices, the sacrifice was made, and remember, he sprinkled blood on the people. First of all, however, he sprinkled blood on the altar, which he constructed.

Now, that is significant because it lets us know the character of the old Mosaic Covenant. It is not an unconditional covenant. It’s a conditional covenant and so, consequently, when a person broke the Mosaic Covenant, he became eligible for death. Do we get this? Oh, pardon me, has this entered into the comprehension of your mind. [Laughter] Now, when we talk about covenants, we need to distinguish the Abrahamic Covenant. [More laughter] It’s like my friend [rustles pages] I’m even throwing myself off point. When we think about covenants we think about the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant; those are the unconditional covenants. But the Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant. And, consequently, when Israel broke the covenant, they were under the sentence of death. And they were responsible of themselves to obey. They took it upon themselves to obey. They said, “All that the Lord has commanded us, we will do.” And, hardly, before the ink had dried on whatever the Lord wrote on, [laughter] originally, because what Moses wrote on originally, they had broken. And we know, of course, before Moses even came down from the mount and the giving of the Law to him, they had already had the golden calf and were dancing around in worship of it; to give you an understanding of just what human nature is like, after the fall.

So what a fitting illustration he talks about here, when he says, “Therefore, not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people.” He sprinkled the book, as a reference to the Lord God and his responsibilities. He would carry out all of his responsibilities but he sprinkled the people who had made the promise that they would keep the Law. The very fact that he sprinkled the

both of them is an evidence that this is a covenant in which the two people have responsibility. It's not a unilateral covenant; it's a bi-lateral covenant. That's important to remember. Three unconditional covenants but this is a bi-lateral covenant. Men have responsibility, God has responsibility, and the sprinkling of the altar with blood and the sprinkling of the people with blood shows the two responsibilities.

Now he goes on to say and he says, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.” He's referring back to chapter 24, “Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” So the universality of the blood sacrifice is the prime, is the climax, which he reaches in verse 22. And that's the last of the verses that we want to look at tonight. “According to the law, almost all things,” almost all things? Well, yes, some things were purified by incense. There may be some other instances, too. But, “Almost all things,” nearly all things, is the meaning of the adverb, “are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” And even in those cases, the fundamental remission came from blood.

This statement, “without shedding of blood there is no remission,” is one of the three famous “without” statements made in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In chapter 11 in verse 6, remember, we have the famous statement, “Without faith it's impossible to please Him.” And then in chapter 12 in verse 14, “Pursue peace with all people and holiness without which no one shall see the Lord.” Without faith it's impossible to please God; without holiness it's impossible to see the Lord. But without faith, it's impossible as well.

Now, I want to, since our time is just about up, to conclude. The first thing, I think, it's important for us to see here is that there is such a thing as remission of sins. I know that seems just a common thing that everybody in Believers Chapel, who's heard lots of Bible teaching would know, but it is important to keep mentioning it because there's always someone, there's always someone here who has not heard the teaching of the word of God. There is such a thing as remission of sins.

And, furthermore, there is such a thing as knowing that we have remission of sins and to know that our remission is an eternal remission. That is, once we have it, we have it forever. We may know that we have it.

I spoke Sunday morning about things we can know in the light of the fact that so many people today even in evangelical theology and in evangelical churches are so downgrading theology that theology is rarely ever taught in our pulpits anymore. The kinds of things we find in our pulpits are the little things that have to do with the incidental problems of life.

Now, don't think for one moment I don't think that they are important, but theology is the best way to solve those problems. And so instead of giving us theology, we are launched into discussion of human psychological principles and human psychological thinking, not realizing psychological thinking has been in process of change ever since the days of Freud and even before him. So psychology is not a teaching that is substantial and immutable as the teaching of the word of God. And I mentioned Sunday morning when I was given the privilege of supplying for Dan that the apostle deals with it in Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7, very plainly and tells us that we can count on the peace that we should have with the Lord God, and it's something that he gives us, when we turn to Him for it in all of the experiences of life. So we have remission of sins and we may know that we have it.

Now, secondly, it's never obtained without blood. Men have many false trusts. Some men are close to the Bible in their thinking; they trust in repentance. Now, repentance is a precious gift of God. The Bible calls it a gift and it's a precious gift of God, but it doesn't have any atoning power, in itself. In the case of the blood, it has atoning power. Men also trust their reformation. Now, of course, it's very important to reform, if our lives have been contrary to the word of God, to repent and to change the pattern of our lives; to know what reformation means. If a person owes a lot of money, walks into his bank, to the man with whom he's been dealing and says to his man, his trust officer and says, “Sir, I believe that I've been making a mistake. I've been running up debts and I've been having a terrible time paying my debts. I've determined I'm not going to borrow anymore.” I

imagine the fellow says, “My, I’m certainly relieved to hear that.” But he will also add, “What about what you already owe?” Reformation is like that. To reform, if it were possible, does not in any way cancel your past debt. In fact, the book of Ecclesiastes speaks about that. Prayers are important. They do not give us remission of our sins. Self-denial is important, flagellation of the body, fasts, all of the kinds of things that suggest self-reformation; they do not help us so far as the forgiveness of sins is concerned.

There is an old story, it’s not a story, and it really is from a poem that illustrates the fact that sacrifice is not the way to salvation. There is a species appeal someone has said in that favorite bit of characteristic American verse, Jim Bloodsoe, it’s a verse about the godless, blasphemous, adulterous engineer of a Mississippi steamboat, who one night when his steamer took fire held the boat against the river bank until every last soul was safe on land while Jim, himself, gave up his life on the burning boat. This is the story of the poem, but there is this stanza in it, “He’s seen his duty, a dead sure thing, and went for it, thar and then, and Christ ain’t a going to be too hard, for a man who died for men.” Well, that’s very sweet. It’s the kind of thing that is invoked even by our political leaders, who suggest that the man who goes over and loses his life in the service of the country, he immediately is conveyed to heaven and the presence of the apostles. It’s just not true; although, we admire anyone who will give themselves for the country. There are ceremonies; ah futile fancy. The ceremonies, religious ceremonies, they don’t help either. There is only one way by which we receive redemption of our sins and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is obtained at the foot of the Cross.

Luther said, I think, I better close with this. Luther said when he was so anxious to bring home to the people to whom he preached the doctrine of justification by faith, by faith alone, that we are justified on the basis of what Christ did for sinners. He was so upset by the fact that those “Wotenburgers,” those Germans from Wotenburg were not paying him any attention. He said, “I want to go into the pulpit with my Bible in hand and throw it at their heads,” in order for them to understand the Gospel of redemption through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, our author has certainly underlined that message here in speaking about what Christ has done for us. “According to the Law, almost all things are purified with blood and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” The remission flows out of the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I hope that is the experience of everyone in this audience, everyone; for, I know, most of you are believers that it’s your experience that you know your sin, you know Christ died for sin, you have been moved to appeal to him in your heart, your inmost being, for the forgiveness that he offers in grace and you’ve received it.

May God help you to do that.

Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and we thank Thee for these marvelous texts that so extol the significance of the death of Christ. We thank Thee for the redemption of our sins. And we thank Thee that we have been called, and we thank Thee that we have an eternal inheritance. May Thy blessing go with us as we close the hour.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.