

Do You Have a Clean Conscience?

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[0 : 00] If you'd open up your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 9, I'm going to be preaching on Hebrews chapter 9.

A golden urn holding the manna and Aaron's staff that budded in the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes. And he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people, by this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing, which is symbolic for the present age.

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations of the body imposed until the time of reformation.

Verse 11. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

[2 : 24] For if the bloods of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Amen. You know, when the check engine light appears on your car's dashboard, it means you've got to do something.

It usually means there's either a malfunction with your car, or you just need to get it regularly serviced. And if you're like me, the temptation is to just to flat out ignore it, and here's why.

I don't want the inconvenience of having to schedule bringing the car into a mechanic, and I definitely don't want to be confronted with what I've got to pay. Maybe you can relate.

Anybody in the room with a check engine light on? I see that hand. Anybody else in the room with a check engine light on? Your conscience is the check engine light of your soul.

[3 : 38] Your conscience is your moral self-awareness. When you do something wrong, your conscience lights up to tell you that your heart needs servicing.

You've got to address this sin, this wrong that you've done. Guilt is knowing that you have sinned and that you're responsible for it.

A guilty verdict in a court of law is a declaration that someone has committed a crime and that they are responsible for it, and there's a consequence that they must pay.

Real sin results in real guilt with real consequences. Do you know what we're talking about this morning? We're talking about a guilty conscience. When the check engine light of your soul turns on after you've done something wrong.

What do you do? When your conscience convicts you of real guilt for real sin. Is there any real help? Is it possible for a guilty conscience to be purified?

[4 : 58] Or in the words of the writer of Hebrews, perfected? Can a guilty conscience be made clean? Well, that's what Hebrews 9, 1 through 14 answers. Here's the answer.

Only the blood of Christ can cleanse your guilty conscience. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse your guilty conscience. And so, this passage, we can divide it into two sections.

What cannot clean your conscience? Verses 1 through 10. And then 11 through 14. What can clean your conscience?

When the check engine light of your soul turns on, don't turn to what can't clean your conscience. Draw near to what can clean your conscience. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse your guilty conscience. So, what can't clean your conscience?

[5 : 59] Let's look at verses 1 through 10. Now, remember that the original audience of the book of Hebrews, this letter came into a church. And they were Christians with a Jewish Hebrew background.

They had been suffering for Christ. We're going to see that more as we get into the latter chapters of the book of Hebrews. And they were being tempted to go back to the old covenant of Judaism. With its earthly tabernacle. And its Levitical priesthood. And its animal sacrifices. The problem was that by going back to these old covenant arrangements, they would have to forsake Christ. And the new covenant he had established in his blood. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse a guilty conscience.

Not the blood of bulls and goats. So, in verses 1 through 10, the writer of Hebrews shows us how the old covenant arrangements of the earthly tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices fall short of cleansing a guilty conscience.

[7 : 15] It's shown to be faulty. Incomplete. So, in verses 1 through 5, we see a description of the earthly tabernacle. Maybe you haven't heard of the earthly tabernacle before.

It was a portable tent that God had the Jewish people design. And he would come and dwell in that tent. And he would kind of like go with his people in the wilderness and into the promised land.

If you want to take a deeper look at the tabernacle, look at Exodus chapter 25, verses chapter 25 through chapter 31. In this passage, we learn that it's an earthly place of holiness.

It's a real dwelling place of God. In 2 through 5, we learn that there's two sections of this tent. The first is this outer section, the holy place with a lampstand and a table and the bread of presents.

And the second section is called the holy of holies. It's the inner section. You would have to go through the holy place to get into the holy of holies. And in the holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant.

[8 : 35] And inside the Ark of the Covenant, you had an urn holding the manna, God's provision for his people in the wilderness. You had the staff of Aaron that budded, showing that he was a priest from God.

And that you had the tablets of the Old Covenant, the Ten Commandments. And so the Ark was this kind of remembrance of the Old Covenant.

And on it, the top of the Ark was the mercy seat. And it was believed, we see it throughout the Old Testament, God would dwell. He would come in his cloud of presence, the Shekinah glory, and come within the holy of holies to dwell with his people.

It's quite a description. It was a real way in which God was dwelling with his people. But what the tabernacle, the earthly tabernacle, with these two sections make very clear is this.

Even though God was with his people, he was separate from his people. Restricted access. So we move from the earthly temple.

[9 : 48] Now let's talk about the Levitical priests. In verses 6 and 7, we have this description of priestly duties. In verse 6, we have kind of the everyday priests who come in and out of that first section, the holy place.

And what they were doing, and they're coming in and going out. They were tending to the oil in the lampstand. They were placing the bread of presence. They were making sure there was incense on the altar. But what you need to understand is, it was only Levitical priests who were entering the holy place.

No other person from Israel could enter. Restricted access. And then we look at verse 7. And in verse 7, it even gets more restricted.

Because the high priest, only the high priest, could enter the holy of holies only once a year.

And he would enter on what's called the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur. Restricted access.

[11 : 05] And now we move to the animal sacrifice. Of the old covenant. The former arrangement. In verses 7 through 10, we see that the high priest, he had to sacrifice a bull.

The shedding of blood to cover his own sin. Before he'd go into the holy of holies on Yom Kippur. At which time he would bring in the blood of an unblemished goat. And sprinkle it upon the mercy seat

to cover the sins of Israel for the year.

This was repeated year after year after year. Could you imagine a time lapse photography? You know those time lapse photographs of like, of seasons in Yosemite?

Could you just imagine a time lapse photography over 15 or 20 years of the same high priest entering into the holy of holies with the blood? And over 10 to 15, 20 years you have this man who's getting more and more aged and decrepit.

Kind of entering into the holy of holies. Bringing blood and then leaving. Bringing blood and then leaving. Do you know what it means? It's what we read later.

[12 : 22] It's the blood of bulls in coats cannot take away sins. Again and again and again.

And what God's people and us are being reminded of in this is that sin results, real sin results in real guilt and requires real blood.

Something has to die. We read in 10.4 that the blood of bulls and goats can, it's impossible to take away sins.

Excuse me, in 9 verses 9 and 10 we read this. According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

It cannot. It comes up short. The blood of bulls and goats, it's impossible for those to take away sins. It's impossible for animal blood to take away, make clean our consciences, our inner beings.

[13 : 33] It's impossible for us.

Animal sacrifice. All part of the old covenant arrangement. The seriousness of sin, but couldn't cleanse the heart of sinners. And so that's why we read 8.7.

For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Or in verse 13 of chapter 8, and speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete.

This arrangement has been made obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish, vanish away. But did you notice verse 8 in chapter 9?

By this arrangement, the Holy Spirit indicates, the Holy Spirit speaking a word, that the way into the holy places is not yet opened, as long as the first section is still standing, which is symbolic for the present age.

[15 : 04] That word in verse 9, symbolic, we get the word parable from. And so the Holy Spirit is pointing to the old covenant arrangement and saying, hey, you in the present age, this is a little parable for you.

Learn from it. And what he's saying is, as long as this system is up and operational, it keeps closed, the true way into the heavenly tent, God's heavenly dwelling place.

Don't go back. Don't go back to the first covenant. You can't cleanse your guilty conscience. Only the blood of Christ can.

But I'm guessing the majority of us are like, I don't care. I'm not looking to go back to an earthly tabernacle. I am not looking for a Levitical priest on Google.

I'm definitely not going to Meijer to find an animal sacrifice. But what you need to understand is that though we're not tempted to go back to the old covenant, we are tempted to look to arrangements incapable of cleansing our consciences.

[16 : 33] We try to mediate our own atonements. When the check engine light of your soul turns on, I'm guessing you turn to one of the following early on.

Here's the first one. When you become aware of the guilt of your sin, you try to outgood your guilt.

Your thinking is, I just need to do more good than wrong.

And if I do more good than wrong, God will see that in the end, and I'll be okay. But the sad thing is, God doesn't settle accounts that way.

You can't outgood your guilt. Your guilt for real sin stands against you. It condemns you.

You can't cover it up with your own do-gooding. That's not going to work. Or maybe, instead of trying to outgood your guilt, you make others pay for your guilt.

[17 : 39] This is kind of a victim mentality or blame shifting. It's a way to avoid taking responsibility for your real sin and your real guilt and your real consequences that are due.

You're like, this person is the reason why I feel so guilty. And maybe there's something to that, but we must take responsibility for our own sin.

Another way that we try to, another arrangement, is to try to minimize our guilt. And the way that we minimize our guilt is by comparing ourselves to other people.

We're like, you know, I know I'm pretty bad, but I'm not that bad. Here's another way that we try to minimize our guilt. We theologize it.

We say things like this. God doesn't see that small stuff. Or we say, God doesn't care about the details like that. It's not a big deal to him.

[18 : 41] He sees that's not significant. Or the ultimate minimization of God is this. The ultimate way to minimize your guilt is by cutting God off.

You know, one of the easiest ways to be relieved of your guilt is to separate it from God. You just say, God doesn't exist. There is a way you can stop feeling guilty about your wrongs.

It's just not true. Other ways that people try to kind of deal with their guilt, they implode.

They are so aware. They're so ashamed. They're so guilt-ridden. They can't sleep at night. And we all know the stories of people who have taken their own lives because they're so guilty.

I happen to think that the primary way that people seek to deal with their own sin, they find an arrangement, is by numbing themselves to their guilt.

[19 : 49] You find ways to distract yourself, to numb yourself by being busy, by finding entertainment, by drinking yourself numb to your guilt, by smoking yourself numb to your guilt, by sexing yourself numb to your guilt.

They're just different tactics to numb yourself to your real guilt. All these arrangements, like the old covenant, are incapable of cleansing, of purifying, of perfecting a guilty conscience.

Don't turn to that. When your check engine light goes on, don't turn to those things. They can't cleanse you. There's only one thing that can cleanse you, to which we now turn.

What can cleanse your conscience? Verses 11 through 14, only Christ's blood can cleanse your guilty conscience. That's the point of verses 11 through 14.

And 11 through 14, it's a contrast. It's a contrast between the new covenant arrangement in Christ and the old covenant arrangement. What we see in verses 11 through 14 is a better tabernacle, a better priest, and a better sacrifice.

[21 : 21] Verse 11, the second half in particular, we see the better tent. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands, that is not of this creation, he entered once for all into the holy places.

If you turn back in your Bible to Hebrews chapter 8, verse 5, we see that the earthly tabernacle pointed to the heavenly tabernacle.

In verse 5 we read, they served a copy in shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, Exodus 25 through 31, when he was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, see that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

In other words, the earthly tabernacle is patterned off the heavenly tabernacle. The heavenly dwelling place, the heavenly sanctuary, where God is.

It's not made with human hands. It's not of this creation. We're talking about the actual, present, permanent, dwelling place of God.

[22 : 43] 8, 1, and 2. Now the point in what we are saying is this, we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

Better tent. Look at 9:24. For Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. You see, the new covenant, what you learned about last week, has ushered in a better tent, better tabernacle.

And through the blood of Christ, we have unrestricted access to the very presence of God. Better tent. Better priest.

If you look back at verse 11, chapter 9, but when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, high priest of the good things that have come.

[23 : 54] Remember, Jesus Christ is not a priest in the order of the Levitical priesthood. He's a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which means he is a king priest, which means he is indestructible, which means he has a permanent priesthood.

Would you repeat after me? Christ is my risen and reigning priest and king the anchor of my soul whose blood cleanses my conscience.

Unlike the Levitical priests who were sinners and died, Christ is sinless and lives an indestructible life.

In verse 11, we read that but when Christ appeared as a high priest. Did anybody notice I didn't mention verse 10? If you look back at verse 10, but deal only, speaking of the old covenant and its regulations, they only deal with food and drink and various washings outside, kind of like ceremonial cleanness, regulations of the body, external, imposed until the time of reformation.

the time of reformation in the Greek language in which the New Testament was written in, that word reformation means to make straight.

[25 : 41] It was used in first century medical terminology in order to set straight a broken arm, to set in place a joint out of place, to make it straight.

And so what we're being told here is that the new covenant makes straight what the old covenant couldn't. That time of reformation began when Jesus appeared.

He brought the good things of the new covenant with him. He came to make straight what was crooked. He came to inaugurate a new covenant that made the old covenant obsolete and useless. And notice in verse 12 that it's through his blood that he entered God's dwelling place. And that once for all. Unlike the priests, Levitical priests who came and went in and out of the early tent, remember that, those kind of like 15 to 20 year photos of the high priest coming in and out, Jesus has entered the heavenly dwelling place of God permanently.

If you look back at chapter 7 verses 24 and 25, we read this, but he holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever. Consequently, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him draw near into the heavenly tent.

[27 : 22] Since he always lives to make intercession for them, he's a better priest and he has a better ministry. Especially, especially, especially when the check engine light of your soul turns on.

better priest, better tent, better sacrifice. What we see in verses 11 through 14 is that this new covenant arrangement is a better sacrifice with better blood.

Not the blood of goats, bulls, heifers, but the blood of the unblemished priest king, the blood of Christ.

In verses 13 and 14, we have what's called a lesser to greater argument. It goes like this. The lesser, verse 13.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of deviled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, in other words, hey, the old covenant did some purifying, it was of the outer person, it was good.

[28 : 41] If the blood of bulls and goats could do that, verse 14, how much more? How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, that is the Holy Spirit working in Jesus as he lived on this planet to live a perfect life, he never, there was no, not once, a check engine light in his soul, but the blood of Christ who threw the eternal spirit off himself, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God, you see, the blood of Christ can do what the blood of animals can't, purify our conscience from dead works, cleanse us through and through, it's a comparison between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ's, the blood of animals, hey, can perfect your body, make you clean on the outside, but it's only the blood of

Christ that can clean you in the inside, what makes Christ's blood better than the blood of animals? why can't the blood of bulls and goats take away sin, but the blood of Christ can?

Christ is totally God and totally man, totally, completely, utterly man, sinless life, perfect conscience, perfect conscience, and he's totally God, eternal, indestructible, and when this totally God, totally man, Jesus Christ died on the cross, his blood was the perfect unblemished sacrifice, his death paid for your sin once and for all and in full.

If your sin provoked God's eternal wrath, Christ's blood satisfies that eternal wrath, because he's both totally God and totally man.

What this means is that his blood secured in eternal redemption. You see that in verse 12? Thus securing in eternal redemption.

[31 : 13] That word redemption is oftentimes a kind of a religious word, but what it means is just another way of talking about salvation in terms of a transaction.

Redemption, that language was used in the first century to describe buying someone out of slavery, or buying someone out of prison, or buying someone out of debt, that you would pay a redemption price called a ransom, and that would free that person from prison or slavery or debt.

And so this eternal redemption that has been secured has been secured by the blood of Christ for all who believe. All of God's wrath for all of your sin was poured out for all and in full on Christ, which means all of your sin, the penalty of it, has been forgiven. forgiven. Totally, utterly, completely, really forgiven. Let me mix my metaphors. Let's say you have a fever. Your fever means you have an infection. You can manage your fever, or you can use antibiotics, or essential oils, any fans? [32 : 44] to address the infection. And when you address the infection, the fever goes away. God, through Christ's blood, paid the penalty of your sin so that your guilt fever goes away.

Christ's blood is so better than the blood of animals. it does only what God can do. Remove the penalty of sin, and therefore remove the guilt of your sin, and therefore cleanse your guilty conscience.

The real guilt for your real sin has been really forgiven in Christ. It turns off the check engine light. It relieves you of the burden. Once for all, and in full, Christ shed his blood for the penalty of your sin.

You know what this means? Don't go back to to that which can't cleanse your guilty conscience. Draw near to who can.

[34 : 12] This is good news. This is gospel news for a guilty conscience. It's a better tent, a better priest, and a better sacrifice with better blood that establishes a better redemption for eternity.

So you know what we must do? Here's what we must do. three ways to apply this. When you are reminded of past sins, anybody in the room reminded of past sins? I've got some horrific past sins. And sometimes the devil uses a flaming arrow to launch at me. When you are reminded of past sins, do you know what you need to do? You need to preach. You need to preach the gospel to yourself.

You need to say things like this, Christian, that sin, not in part, but the whole, was paid for by the blood of Christ. I've been cleansed.

[35 : 24] No more guilt. Am I grieved that I did that? Yes. Am I guilty that I did that? No more. So the first way we draw near is by preaching the blood to ourselves.

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Okay, second, let's just say, hypothetically speaking, you have a brother or sister in Christ, and they believe that Christ's blood can cleanse them of the little to moderate sized sins, but not the big stuff.

Not rape, too big. Not if you sold your body for money, that's too big. Not if you committed adultery, that's too big.

not if you extorted somebody, not if you were part in an abortion, too big. Jenny and I recently brought our grandson Hudson through the quick trip car wash.

I was thrilled. Hudson didn't care. But our Honda CRV fit perfect. Could you imagine our Honda CRV pulling out and at the other end of the quick trip car wash is an 18-wheeler tractor trailer with a 53-foot trailer.

[37 : 06] You're like, that doesn't fit. There's some people in this room right now who think that you have a semi-tractor trailer sized sin that can't fit through the guilt wash of the blood.

It's too big. It's too big. I can handle my little sins but can't handle the big stuff. You're underestimating the blood.

There is no sin too big for the guilt wash of the blood. No sin too big.

He is able. Perhaps you and your shame are thinking too little of the blood. Your sin is not too big for the blood.

In fact, the blood of Christ is bigger and better than the biggest sin you've ever made. there is forgiveness, there is cleansing through the blood.

[38 : 20] So you tell your friend, no, that sin isn't bigger than Christ's blood. Christ's blood is bigger than that. The guilt of that has been paid for.

I've got plenty of 18 wheelers that have been forgiven and cleansed. The third area is this. You're like, okay, okay, past sins, I get it, but what happens if I sin today? What happens if I sin tomorrow or later in the week? What do I do? Well, this once for all and in full blood payment, that's always waiting.

It's promised. It's been done. He's paid it. He's in the heaven. He's interceding for you. So when you sin, you make a beeline to your priest king.

You don't avoid him. You confess your sin to him. Like, oh, Lord Jesus, I did it again. Paid in full once for all.

[39 : 31] If we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1. 9. And then when you confess your sins, you confess his peace cleansed by the blood.

Constantly available. Your guilt has been permanently removed because the payment has been made.

what can cleanse your guilty conscience? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

We've looked at what can't cleanse your guilty conscience and we've looked at what can cleanse your guilty conscience. So when the check engine light of your soul turns on and you are feeling guilt, don't turn to what can't clean your conscience.

Draw near to who has cleaned your conscience only by the blood of Christ. The book of Hebrews is one long exhortation warning us to don't drift, to don't go back and encouraging us to draw near, to hold fast, to press on, and to convince you the blood of Christ has covered you forever.

[41 : 14] Makes you want to say thank you. Let's pray and sing. Lord Jesus, our indestructible priest and king who right now you are in the very presence of God.

Thank you. Thank you for doing what none of us can do for no blood can cover your blood. We thank you for giving yourself for us, for cleansing our consciences.

it is such good news. Will you receive our praise now Lord?

In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.