

Beginning in Hebrews 9 'blood' becomes an important theme, a misunderstood and distasteful theme for many today. Similarly there is an undervaluing today of the needs which the readers of Hebrews acutely sensed: to have access to God and to be cleansed of spiritual impurity. The costly, divinely instituted, sacrificial slaughter of animals over 1,500 years had taught them the value of cleansing and the privilege of access to God. The author of Hebrews argues that the more precious blood of Jesus Christ is much more powerful and is necessary for true access to God and for real, inward cleansing.

I. There is power in the blood of Christ to open the way for us into God's presence (9:11–12).

According to Hebrews 10:19–22 Jesus Christ, by His own blood, opened the way for believers into God's presence and each of the phrases in 9:11–12 contribute to understanding that.

1. *His high priestly ministry brought with it "the good things".*

The "good things" are the blessings under the new covenant which believers today now may begin to enjoy by being in Christ. Among other blessings, sins are given and remembered no more. Sin had kept people out of the presence of God, but through Jesus Christ, the believer's high priestly representative, there is now access to God.

2. *His high priestly ministry took Him through the better and more perfect tabernacle into the Most Holy place, the very presence of God the Father.*

These two "places" are nothing earthly, but heavenly (cf. 9:24), the pattern from which the earthly was built. Jesus entered the presence of the Father, going through the Holy Place into the Most Holy, and then unlike the Jewish high priests, He stayed there. Being "in Christ" the true believer is now seated with Christ in the heavenly places (cf. Ephesians 2:6).

3. *His high priestly ministry obtained for believers eternal redemption.*

Redemption originally referred to paying a price to purchase something back, and then came to include the idea of making free by paying a ransom. The believer's salvation is described as a redemption (e.g., Mark 10:45; Romans 3:24; 8:23; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). A price had to be paid to free mankind from the bondage of sin which began with Adam's sin. That price is the blood of Jesus Christ. As an "eternal" redemption, there is no expiration of its effectiveness or application to true believers. Having been redeemed the believer belongs to God (1 Corinthians 6:19–20), implying also access to God through our High Priest.

You can evaluate the importance you place on access to God by considering the extent to which you use it. The more you neglect it, the less you probably value it. Remember its price – the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

II. There is power in the blood of Christ for our deep cleansing (9:13–14).

1. *His blood upped the provision from good to very much better.*

The first covenant provided only the blood of goats and bulls, that is, the sacrifices, and the sprinkling with the ashes of a heifer. (As explained in Numbers 19, the person ceremonially defiled by contact with a dead body could be cleansed in a ritual including the sprinkling of water mixed with the ashes of a specially sacrificed red heifer.) But such rites of purification were nothing compared to the blood of Jesus Christ, made more precious by His Person (Son of God), by being offered through the Spirit, and by His moral perfection.

2. *His blood upped the results from good to very much better.*

It is only logical that the results of Christ's sacrifice would be better than the mere outward cleansing which the first covenant provided, a cleansing for inclusion in the visible community. Christ's blood gives inward cleansing. "Dead works" not only lead to death (NIV) but should also be understood as defiling, excluding all sinful humanity from God's community. The blood of Christ purifies the conscience from them and opens the way to priestly service to the living God.

Every child of God should remember how powerful and precious was the blood of Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death was essential to redeem from the bondage of sin and cleanse from sin's defilement. Deepen your joy and your appreciation of Christ by reflecting on this evidence of His greatness.

Questions for further reflection and discussion:

- What does the phrase "blood of Christ" add to our understanding of the "death of Christ" and why is it important?
- Evaluate the importance which you place upon access to God. Does it measure up to the price which was paid for you to have it? Why/why not? How can it be improved?
- How are you tempted to de-emphasize the defiling effects of sin in your life? What would help us realize how drastic are the effects of any sin in our relationship to God?