

The promises are a blood-bought gift (Hebrews 9:15–22)

Although it is clear from Hebrews 9:11–14 that the precious blood of Jesus Christ is powerful to open access to God and inwardly cleanse, was His death really necessary? Christ crucified was a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles (1 Cor 1:23). The author of Hebrews argues that the promises of the new covenant could only be granted as a blood-bought gift, Christ's blood.

I. *Christ's death was necessary for the new covenant (9:15).*

1. *His own death was necessary for His mediating the new covenant.*

“For this reason” most likely looks back especially to vv. 11–14, but also to much of what has been said in the letter. Because Jesus is both God the Son and man, He is mediator, perfectly representing God to man. Because of His character and function as High Priest, He is mediator, perfectly representing man to God. Because of His sacrifice, He is mediator, entering the Most Holy place in heaven by His own blood with a basis to mediate between a holy God and sinful man.

2. *His death was necessary for God's new-covenant promise of redemption from sin.*

“Since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions ...” (NASB) points to death as the ransom price. God's promise to show mercy and remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:10–14) could only happen through the death of the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah (Isaiah 53:5–6). His death paid the penalty, the “wages” of sin (Romans 6:23). The gift of eternal life was a blood-bought gift; HIS blood was necessary.

3. *His death was necessary for the new covenant in order to give the “called” their eternal inheritance.*

The “eternal inheritance” of the “called” is “eternal life” (Romans 6:23), “rest” (Hebrew 4:1), knowing God (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:11), and more. The “called” are those “called” of God (cf. Hebrews 3:1) who have heard and responded in faith to the message of Jesus Christ. The inheritance is blood-bought gift and the only blood that could buy it was the blood of Jesus Christ.

II. *Death was necessary in their experience of covenants (9:16–22).*

Two types of covenants (non-negotiable dispositions) with which the readers would have been familiar, a last will and testament and the old covenant made at Sinai, illustrated the necessity of death in executing a covenant.

1. *The need for death is implied even in the Greek terminology (9:16–17).*

“Will” translates the same word as “covenant” and was the typical Hellenistic use of the word. The death of one who made a will had to be established to execute the will; neither was the will final while the testator was living. From their normal, everyday life they should have understood that it was unreasonable to see the necessity of death for the execution of a “disposition.”

2. *The need for death was apparent in the inauguration of the first covenant (9:18–22).*

This is the more important argument for the author, that not even the first covenant was inaugurated without “blood.” Verses 19–20 relate the events of Exodus 24:1–8 and Moses' words. The author adds some items, possibly from extra-biblical tradition, but not unreasonable nor unknown in the O.T. Later the tabernacle was anointed and “sanctified” (Exodus 40; Numbers 7:1) implying the use of blood then as well. Most significantly the law, instituted at that time required blood from a sacrificial death in almost all cases to cleanse and for the forgiveness of sin.

The continual reminder that death and blood were necessary for cleansing and forgiveness made it only logical that the new covenant would require “blood”. That which God promised to give them would be a blood-bought gift.

The Jewish Christians of NT times should have known that a sacrificial death was necessary to receive the promises of the new covenant. Death has been the penalty for sin since creation. There had to be a death for freedom from sin and Christ's death was the only one which could buy that freedom.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Based on what you know from Hebrews, explain the reason(s) that Christ's death was necessary. In what way is the “gift” of eternal life free and in what way is it not free?
- Beyond the fact of Christ's death, what does it mean to you that Christ had to die for you? How will this cause you respond to God?
- Are there any sins for which death is not the penalty? Why/why not? Consider the sins of Romans 1:21–32 or the short list of the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19–21. How might considering each one as an offense requiring death remove any tolerance of those sins in your own life? Are there any which you tolerate? If so, what will you do about it?