

The Beginning of Eternal Renewal

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn now to our Bible reading and we're back into the book of Hebrews. We've been going through Hebrews, but we took a break a little while before Christmas. And this morning we're coming back to Hebrews chapter 9.

And we'll have to refresh ourselves a little bit as we go along with where we've got to and what's going on. But chapter 7, 8, 9 and first half of chapter 10 are really the very center of the argument of the book, the center of the book.

And chapters 8 and 9 are the center of the center, if I can put it that way. And if you can remember all the way back to before Christmas and the last time we looked at chapter 8, we were thinking about how the coming of Jesus brought the end to all mere earthly religion, the end to the era in which we are now living in the last days of this earthly life, the world under the curse.

And Hebrews is all about the beginning, the breaking in of the power of the age to come, the world to come. It's what he's speaking about, he says in chapter 2, verse 5.

And the very last verse of chapter 8 says of the prophet Jeremiah, when he was speaking these words that are quoted in the preceding verses, that in speaking way back then of a new covenant, the prophet Jeremiah is clearly making the first one obsolete.

[1 : 38] And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. And now he focuses in on one very central aspect of that whole old covenant, Old Testament faith, which is the worship of the tabernacle and the priests.

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place for holiness. For a tent was prepared. The first section in which there were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the presence, it's called the holy place.

Behind the second curtain was a second section called the most holy place. Having the golden altar of incense, the ark of the covenant covered in all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna and the air and staff that budded, and above all the tablets of the covenant.

Above it were the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the mercy seat. These things we cannot now speak in detail. But here's the point.

Here's why he's bringing it up. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties. But into the second section only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, that's on the day of atonement, and not without taking blood.

[3 : 13] Never without blood. I like the way the NIV puts it there. The blood which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

That doesn't just mean occasional slip-ups. It really doesn't mean all sins. It's distinguishing unintentional sins from outright rank rebellion and apostasy against God, for which, of course, there can be no forgiveness.

But he offers for himself as well as for the sins of the people. And by this, the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet open, as long as the first section is still standing, that is, standing separately from that second section by the curtain, which is symbolic for the present age, or the age then present, which we are now living in the very last days of.

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the worshiper. Cannot perfect the worshiper with respect to their conscience.

They deal only with food and drink and various washings. Regulations for, better to translate, for the flesh. It's the same as in verse 13.

[4 : 35] Regulations for the flesh imposed until the time of Reformation. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then passing 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

place.

That is, the real holy places. Not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies 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, how much more will the blood of Christ purify our consciences from dead works, from works that lead only to death, to serve, to worship the living God.

Amen. May God bless to us. This is his word. Well, let's turn back to Hebrews chapter 9, the passage we read together, page 1005, I think, if you have one of the visitor's Bibles.

As I said, we're coming back to Hebrews that we left off well before Christmas, so we probably need to remind ourselves a little of where we've got to. The writer, remember, is writing to struggling and frail Christians who need encouragement not to drift back under pressure.

[6 : 29] Well, we know those pressures only too well, don't we? We, like they, face frequent pressures, the pressure of shame in a culture that scorns our message. That's not easy, is it?

Think of the outcry against the evangelist Franklin Graham's visit, because he will say publicly things that the Bible says about sins.

And, of course, many Christians even don't want to be touched by that shame, do they? Because we want the culture's approval. We don't want the culture's anger against us. And, of course, many Christians today in the world also are facing real persecution, real suffering.

And, of course, all of us, wherever we are, we face the daily pressure of our own sin. And so there is great pressure to drift back, back into the world that God has called us out from.

So whether it's 1st century Christians or 21st century, God's people need to be challenged, to endure, to persevere, to keep on following Jesus, to keep running with endurance the race that is set before us.

[7 : 40] And we will endure and not drift only if we keep hearing and heeding God's voice. And we'll do that only by keeping paying close attention to the gospel message in the scriptures.

Because it's only there, the writer tells us, that we will find the strengthening comfort that can keep us from drifting. So that's what the writer's doing.

He's calling his whole message, in fact, a word of exhortation. And its whole focus and substance is that we have that absolutely secure and solid hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we can, and therefore we must, keep looking to him and looking to him alone as with our sovereign and as our savior.

The one who alone we are to trust and to obey right to the very end. That's his main point. Look at chapter 8, verses 1 and 2. He tells us the main point is this.

[8 : 45] Jesus is the king who is sovereign over all. He's at the majesty sitting in heaven. And Jesus is the priest. He's the savior of all of his own.

He's a minister in the true sanctuary of God in heaven. He's saying it's Jesus alone and it's Jesus forever. Don't look back from him. And you can have, and therefore you must have, unwavering faith in his unshakable kingdom.

Hebrews is very clear. It gives us severe warnings all the way through, especially as we saw in the long passage in chapter 6. And we'll see again in the second half of chapter 10. Warnings of the real and terrible danger of turning back.

It's to spurn the son of God. It's to profane the blood of Jesus. It's to outrage the spirit of grace. And that is the sin, he says, for which there can be no forgiveness.

Only fearful judgment. But in between those solemn and real warnings are these central chapters of his message, which are full, full of wonderful encouragement about the utter sufficiency of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

[10 : 04] The one in whom we have God's final and supreme revelation of himself in our world. And through whom God has accomplished his final and supreme rescue of lost sinners.

And in these chapters he spells out three statements that he summarized about Jesus in chapter 5 verses 9 and 10. That he is the promised everlasting priestly son of God.

He's like Melchizedek, a priest forever. And we saw that's what's explained in chapter 7. And therefore he has become the source of everlasting salvation to all who obey him.

That's what he gets to in the first half of chapter 10. But that is because, as chapter 5 verse 9 says, Jesus was made perfect.

That is, he fulfilled his true destiny as God's Savior by becoming himself the everlasting perfect sacrifice for sin.

[11 : 09] And it's the explanation of that that lies at the very center of these central chapters in the whole book in chapters 8 and 9.

It's the once for all sufficient forever sacrifice that brought to an end all earthly religion and the beginning of the eternal restoration of the whole cosmos.

So Hebrews begins in chapter 1, the very beginning, saying that we are now living in the last days of that whole old order, the world under the curse of sin. And in the coming of the Son of God, there is the inauguration of his kingdom.

And that is the beginning of the promised new creation that the prophets had always longed for.

The world to come, as he puts it in chapter 2 verse 5. That's what I'm speaking about in the gospel.

It's not yet fully consummated. Well, he goes on and says that. No, we don't yet see everything in subjection to Jesus. But, he tells us, Jesus has already entered that glorious future.

[12 : 20] The future he will share with us if we keep our confidence firm to the end. Because God is even now gathering his people for that new world.

And we're already, he says in chapter 12, we're already receiving the kingdom that can never be shaken. We've tasted already of the powers of the world to come, he says in chapter 6, when we receive the gospel.

And through Jesus, our great high priest, already, he tells us, we are anchored. Do you remember chapter 6? Anchored in the world to come, where he's gone as a forerunner.

Pioneering that way for us. And he says, we therefore already have access to the invisible God in heaven, behind the curtain, as he puts it.

Right into the very holiest place, where God himself dwells forever. So you see, Jesus Christ did not come into this world to bring a new religion for the world.

[13 : 25] Jesus came to bring recreation of the whole world. He came to bring an end to all earthly religion, even, even his own God-given religion of the former days, which came through Moses, which centered on the tabernacle and the temple and the priests and so on.

He brings an end to that because he brought all that to fulfillment. He brought the everlasting renewal that it always promised and that it was given to bear witness to, to God's people in these ancient days.

The whole of Old Testament religion, from the very start, taught God's people to look forward to a consummation beyond itself, beyond its rituals, in the substance of the fulfillment of everything that it just demonstrated in a much more shadowy form.

Look at chapter 8, verse 5, where we looked at last time. All of that religion was revealing truth about God because it gave on earth true copies of real heavenly things to point God's people to the true God in heaven.

But it was also, remember, pointing forward. It was foreshadowing a greater truth and a greater fulfillment still to come by the shadows that it gave of the greater light that still lay in the future.

[14 : 47] And that was obvious even in these old days. Chapter 7, verse 11 said it was obvious that the Levitical priests couldn't themselves bring about perfection. They couldn't fulfill that restoration of man to God.

That's why the psalmist spoke of a different order of priesthood that still had to come, a priest forever who would be like Melchizedek. That was evident in the prophets like Jeremiah who's quoted so extensively here in chapter 8 because he was promising a new and a better covenant order that was still to come.

That is, he was promising the consummation of what all the covenants promised from the very beginning, the lasting, permanent fellowship of God with his people.

When their sin would be finally dealt with, when he would say, I will remember their sins no more.

That's why verse 13 of chapter 8 says, in speaking of a new covenant, the whole old order itself will vanish away.

Everything that belonged to it as well, including, he says, was the now obsolete merely earthly religion. And that's what began with the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

[16:02] There has been already a seismic shift from those former days to the latter days, from the merely earthly to the eternal, from the era, as Paul puts it, of the first Adam to the last Adam, the first man to the second man, the second humanity.

Or as Jesus so often spoke, of a change from the old to the new. The era of new wine, of new treasures, of new teaching, of new creation, of a new world, the regeneration, as he called it. Just as the apostles spoke of a new man being created for the new creation. As John spoke of the new commandment God is giving his people. John's vision of the new heavens and the new earth. What did he see? A new Jerusalem full of the people of God who've been given a new name, singing a new song because Jesus says, Behold, I make all things new. The great eternal renewal has begun. And so everything belonged to the old order. Isn't that time expired?

[17:13] Even all that good and holy God-given in its time and for its time, religion. Even the God-given religion of the old covenant order with its magnificent temple and all is now obsolete, says the end of chapter 8.

It's growing old, ready to vanish away. And the prophet Jeremiah saw that long, long ago. But you see, the problem was many of these first century Christians, it seemed, couldn't see that properly. And they were being lured back into wanting to walk by the comforting religion of things that they could see, things that they could touch, things that they could smell.

To be able to judge their spiritual status and their spiritual state by all of those kinds of things. Now we might think, well, how foolish they must have been.

Didn't they understand the gospel? But friends, church history and even the present day tells us that we're not so very different today. All over the world today, many people in the name of Christ will be seeking comfort in things that are visible, things that are tangible, things of religion, in priests and incense, in rosaries and relics.

[18:31] Think of all of that in the Roman church and in the Eastern Orthodox churches. Or, many, many people will be seeking that comfort and that assurance in the worship experience of powerful songs.

And in the so-called worship leaders who really are acting like priests without whom you can't really feel connected in true worship, in real worship of God.

That's why Dick Lucas always used to say that the Catholic church and the charismatic church is our first cousins. Because both are taking you back into ideas of true worship that are akin to the religion of the old age and taking you away from the reality that belongs to all believers since Jesus Christ came to the liberated living worship of the true sacrifices of praise to God that come simply from lives lived in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sort of thing that Hebrews chapter 13 will show us. And that's why this letter is important for us today. Just as it was for the first readers. Because all of us are so easily so naturally drawn back in every area of our lives.

We want to focus ourselves. We want to invest in things of this passing world. Things that are passing and not permanent. Things that are earthly not eternal. Things that are fleeting not things that are final.

[20:03] That's true isn't it? Think about your own life. If that wasn't so why on earth would Jesus constantly be warning don't lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust will destroy them.

But in heaven they'll never be destroyed. See our hearts are deeply invested in this world this world of the flesh.

and so easily therefore we neglect as Hebrews says such a great salvation about the world to come which is what we should be speaking about.

And so even in our spiritual thinking even in our theological thinking our natural drift is back from the permanent to the merely preparatory and prophetic to the concerns of forever back to the concerns of the mere flesh to the consummated order back to the mere created order from the invisible but real back to the merely visible which is passing.

See the devil says that to us go back back into the world and you'll find liberation. Focus on these earthly things the things of this life on the flesh think about that in your spending in your sex life in your spirituality that's where you'll find liberation.

[21:25] No says Hebrews in that way lies not fulfillment but utter folly not liberation but total loss the consuming fire of judgment that he speaks of it's that serious it really is.

Well you see in chapter 9 here the issue is the desire for real spirituality for authentic real worship and contrary to what many Christians think either in the first century or in our own 21st century Hebrews tells us that the more visible and elaborate and tangible it is the more limited and restricted is its real power.

In verses 1 to 14 we're given a great contrast between the real limitations of passing earthly religion and the real liberation of permanent eternal redemption in Christ.

Look at verses 1 to 10 first because we see here the great limitations of the earthly worship of the old covenant. The main point in verses 1 to 10 is to show us the restricted worship of earthly religion even at its best given by God until the coming of Jesus Christ.

all the focus is on earthly regulations which speak above all of limitation. Verse 1 the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place for holiness.

[22 : 58] Earthly regulations. Verse 10 regulations for the flesh imposed until the time of reformation.

I don't know why the ESV translates body there instead of flesh. It's the same in verse 13 translated flesh. It means earthly. Chapter 12 verse 9 same word is there. It's translated earthly fathers.

In chapter 2 verse 14 chapter 5 verse 7 it speaks about Jesus days in the flesh speaking about his earthly life. Contrast he's speaking about here is not a contrast of that which is inward and outward. Lots of people often think that. The contrast is between what is of the flesh and what is forever. It's the same contrast as the old and the new. The earthly and the eternal.

The provisional and the permanent. And the point is in these old earthly days of provisional religion access to God was clearly restricted because the atonement of the earthly priests had to be constantly repeated.

[24 : 04] And so worship was curtailed. It was limited for that era of mortal flesh and limited to the era of mortal flesh. That's his point. Verses 1-5 give us a brief sketch of the fabric and the furnishings of the tabernacle.

But he says at the end of verse 5 he doesn't have time for great detail about that nor do we. You'll have to read it later in Exodus and Leviticus. But it's just worth saying some people go to extraordinary lengths of detail about the symbolism of the tabernacle.

Extraordinary allegories for almost everything. Let me just share John Calvin's words. That approach is not only futile but it's dangerous. Take our cue from the writer here. He's not going into details in that way of these things.

But he's telling us what's significant in verses 6-10. Here's the point. He's focusing simply on the tabernacle's division into two sections.

Look at verses 2 and 3. The holy place and the most holy place which is separated by that second curtain. And inside is the ark of the covenant signifying the presence of God himself.

[25 : 10] He's between the cherubim of the glory. That's the glory of God himself. So the focus that he's got here is not on the furniture of the tabernacle it's on the function of the tabernacle.

That's what he's speaking about in verses 6-10. And all the focus is on these two sections and therefore on two clear things. First, on the constant sacrifices indicating atonement was always needing repeating.

And secondly, on the curtain of separation indicating that access was always therefore still restricted. Verses 6 and 7 tell us about the constant sacrifices.

Now atonement is an absolute requirement with blood he says which alone can purge the stain of sin. That's both in the regular sacrifices of the first courts that the ordinary priests went into repeatedly all the time daily.

It's the sort of thing that verse 13 is also speaking about. Sprinkling the ashes of a heifer to cleanse from sin. Read about that in Numbers 19. But above all, verse 7, look, on the day of atonement, once a year in that second section, behind the curtain, in the Holy of Holies, only the high priest and only once a year and never without blood.

[26 : 33] Because both the priests and the people alike need to be cleansed from sin. That's why it was constant. That's why it was never ending. Remember chapter 7, verse 28, where he says that men in their weakness as high priests could never affect permanent cleansing.

How could they? Everyone knew that. Verse 9, everyone knew that these sacrifices cannot perfect the worshiper. They could never deliver people into their true destiny as human beings, created perfectly in the image of God to worship him forever.

How could they? The blood of animals can't purge the conscience of human sin before God. In fact, it's the opposite. Chapter 10, verse 3 says, in these very sacrifices, there's a reminder of sin every year, for it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to actually take away human sin.

Of course, all these rituals could do was to express the promise of God to his people that he would at last be true to his covenant, that he would one day deal forever with sin.

In the latter days, when, verse 10, the time of reformation, correction of all things, would at last come.

[27 : 54] So that reminder of sin in every sacrifice pointed the worshiper in hope to the day when God would declare, as Jeremiah said he would, I will remember their sins no more.

But in the meantime, it reminded them constantly that they were still enslaved to their mortality in this life of flesh, and that they would go the way of all flesh since Adam.

They're still outside Eden. They had limited access to God. And that's what verse 8, you see, the curtain of separation was telling them. That curtain, remember, embroidered with the images of the cherubim and their flaming shore, barring access back to God in Eden.

And verse 8 says, the Holy Spirit was indicating by the very way that this whole priestly system worked, that the way into the holiest place, the way back to intimacy with God, was not yet opened. As long as that first section was still standing, separated from the holy place, the holiest place, by that second curtain. He's saying that that whole thing symbolizes the age then present, that old age, which now, the time of reformation has broken in on, and is superseding it with the age to come, begun once and for all in the redemption of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 30] Look at verse 11, do you see? But now, he says, everything's changed now. And the great limitation of earthly worship under the old covenant has given way to the great liberation of the eternal worship of the new covenant.

And the main point here in verses 11 to 14 is to show us the restored worship of the eternal renewal that has begun already in Jesus Christ.

All the focus here is on the eternal redemption, liberation, forever. But now, verse 11, the promised time of reformation has come, because Christ has come, the Christ of all the covenants long promised, promised.

And all the good things, therefore long promised, are fulfilled, they've begun. Because he brought, well, he brought the end in the sense of fulfillment, but also in the sense of finishing forever those repeated sacrifices for sin.

His blood, verse 12, do you see, once for all offered, has secured an eternal redemption. redemption. And so, you see, access to God is no longer restricted, but full, because atonement is no longer repeated, it's final.

[30 : 54] And therefore, worship is no longer curtailed for the era of mortal flesh. It's consummated at last for the new era of immortal spirit.

See, he graphically portrays that great reversal, even even actually in the way his argument is presented symmetrically. Look at verses 6 to 8. Access is restricted, is the message there.

It's not yet opened. Why? Because, verses 8 to 9, repeated atonement is still required. But now, verses 11 to 13, full and final atonement has been provided, and so, verse 14, free and full access is perfected.

We are liberated from death, literally from works leading only to death. From death to service, to worship, the same word as verse 1, to worship the God of life.

Darkness defeated, and Eden restored. For all who are cleansed by the blood of Christ. It's the beginning of eternal restoration and renewal.

[32 : 09] True worship in the image of God is being restored through Jesus Christ. And all through the letters so far, do you remember, we've been told repeatedly how Christ is the powerful, permanent priest for us in heaven.

How he's able to save us to the uttermost. That being made perfect, that is achieving his destiny as the priest forever for us, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

But now you see we're being told how that came to pass, why that was. And it's there in verse 14, he offered himself to purify us from works leading to death.

So that we might at last truly serve, truly worship the living God, not just in the flesh, but forever. He offered himself, not repeatedly, but verse 12, once for all.

That phrase comes about ten times in these chapters. Look down to verse 26. He appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin through the sacrifice of himself.

[33 : 22] What man could not do, God himself has done. And notice the trinity at work, verse 14. in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, he offered himself through the eternal spirit to God the Father, the perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice.

He appeared, says verse 7, as a high priest bringing the good things, the blessings not just of the flesh age, but of the forever age. And he entered once for all into the real holy place, the greater, the more perfect tent.

That is the inner compartment, the real dwelling of God, not of this creation, but of eternity, of the world to come. And in doing so, he fulfilled exactly the pattern of all that the earthly tabernacle and its priests portrayed.

Verse 11, he passed through the first section and into, verse 12, the holiest place. But it was no shadow. It was the real substance. No provisional cleansing, but a permanent, forever cleansing. A unique sacrifice, verse 12. Not earthly blood only, but heavenly blood. In a unique sanctuary, once and for all, forever.

[34 : 44] Notice three times, do you see the word eternal in these verses? Verse 12, an eternal redemption secured. Verse 14, through the eternal spirit of God himself, which wins for us.

Verse 15, the promised eternal inheritance. The eternal inheritance. To all the provisional cleansing has given way to the permanent cleansing for sin.

The blood of bulls and goats, as verse 13 talks about, yes, it was effective in its time to keep sinful earthly flesh in touch with God through trust in the promises that they carried of that ultimate restoration to come.

but with so many regulations still, so many limitations, so many restrictions. But all of that now, he says, has been superseded at last by the permanent cleansing through Jesus, once for all sacrifice. And it's effective now for all time. Not just for this earthly life. The forever purging for sin, he speaks of in verse 14, liberates us for eternal worship.

[35 : 56] From death to life, to serve, to worship the living God, living before him, living with him forever and ever. The liberation of eternal worship.

From being slaves to sin, to being servants of our true sovereign. No longer the perpetual reminder of human sin and the sacrifices of the blood of bulls and goats, but the permanent release of the heavenly sacrifice through the precious blood of Christ.

No longer a longing for the future, for the real sacrifice that God would provide for sin, to end that powerful slavery to sin. But for us, a looking back on the real sacrifice God has now provided for sin. To begin that never ending life of service to God. You see why in verse 14 he uses that phrase, how much more, how much more we have in the liberation of these last days, tasting already in our flesh lives the power of the age to come, already begun.

How much more we have than the limitations of these former days. saints of all by faith in the promise, by trusting in all the shadows that the tabernacle pointed to, of the good things that were to come.

[37 : 21] Yes, they had assurance of forgiveness. Yes, they had access to God really and truly. Hebrews 11 points that to us, it points them out to us as great heroes of the faith, as the great cloud of witnesses to urge us on in faithfulness in our race today.

But because God's decisive salvation had not yet been accomplished in history, and the way back to God was not yet decisively opened, they lived their life of faith amid great limitations, restrictions, regulations, barriers.

There was still a great sense of distance in a very real way between earth and heaven. But you see, friends, for us now, Christ has appeared as the high priest of the good things that have now come. The powers of the age to come are already at work in our era, the one that we live in, in our lives as believers today. That's why at the end of chapter 11, he says God had prepared something better for us.

There are so, so many things that we have, so much better. But those who went before us had not nearly so fully, not nearly so wonderfully.

[38 : 43] Let me just mention three as we close. We have a far better and greater assurance of forgiveness with God, because atonement has been accomplished once and for all by the blood of Christ through the eternal spirit.

So how much more can we rejoice in the knowledge of our consciences fully cleansed forever from every stain of our sin? Whenever we are reminded of our sins immediately, we're reminded also, aren't we, of the forever forgiveness of our sins in Jesus because of the once and for all blood shed on the cross.

We are reminded of our sins. Of course we are, rightly so, especially when we come together. Because whoever says there's no sin in them deceives themselves, says John. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins because Jesus' blood has been shed once and for all and forever.

We have a far greater assurance. But never, remember verse seven, never without blood. It's a great reminder, isn't it?

That there's no assurance for anyone's sins apart from the blood of Jesus. Only assurance by his blood and his blood alone shed once and forever. It's Jesus alone and it's Jesus forever where real assurance for salvation is to be found.

[40 : 06] Sometimes Christians are tempted to seek something more visible, aren't they? Something more tangible. Something we can hear, something we can touch, something that will give us a better feeling of forgiveness.

And for some it might be the impressive religious expression of grand buildings and impressive music and choirs and all these things. For others, it's more impressive spiritual experiences that can get them into worship.

No, no, says Hebrews. To seek anything other than Jesus' blood alone shed for you forever, that is to turn back from him. That's to profane his blood, outrage his spirit.

To try and add anything to the once and for all sacrifice of Christ is to remove everything that really matters. But there's no need, you see, is there?

Because there is total assurance in his blood alone to purify us from sin forever. Second, we have a far greater access to God than any of the ancients.

[41 : 12] Because Jesus has entered forever into the real holy place, securing an eternal redemption for us. And so already we have complete access to God himself with no need for any earthly priest, any intermediators in earth or in the heavens, saints and all of that.

He has entered the throne room of heaven as the forerunner for us, anchoring our hope there with him where one day we shall be bodily, but already in him. Do you remember chapter 6 verse 19? We can with confidence draw near to the throne of grace and receive mercy and help for every time of need. The way is opened. That was the glorious signal given when Jesus died and the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

The way in is opened and the way out for God to us. We have immediate personal access to heaven itself and to God himself through Jesus Christ.

Not by our merit, but by his great sacrifice. No restrictions. Full reconciliation now already. Isn't that an extraordinary thing for us to know?

[42 : 26] But remember, never without blood. He saves to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him. But when we come in Jesus' name to our Heavenly Father, through his blood, he will never keep us at arm's length.

No matter what we've done, no matter what we've not done, he receives us. He hears our prayers. He helps us. He's merciful to us. Whenever we plead the blood of Jesus, whenever we come humbly in his name alone.

Access to God now is never, ever, about our performance. Our performance. All, all about our position in Christ, eternally redeemed by his blood.

We have a far greater assurance, a far greater access. But finally, I suppose it's a challenge and a question, isn't it? Shouldn't we also have far greater ambition for our lives of service and worship to God?

Verse 14 says, we're liberated from works that lead to death to serve. That is to worship truly the God of life. And Jesus came, as chapter 2 says, to deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[43 : 48] And our liberation is so much greater than all the saints of old. They still had that shadow of death, didn't they? Hanging over their world much more heavily than we do today.

They glimpsed it, the glory, but only from afar. But we look back on the resurrection of Jesus Christ that has destroyed death forever.

And yes, those ancients serve with real faith. Chapter 11 tells us they conquered kingdoms. They enforced justice. They did great deeds. And they suffered mocking and flogging and chains and prison and martyrdom for God.

But all of these, though commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised. And God, God had promised something better for us. To know in our earthly lives of flesh, the definitive joy of being purified from dead works to serve the living God.

God. But I wonder, is our ambition for service, is it really greater than theirs? To serve our Lord Jesus Christ in these last days of this earth?

[45 : 05] Well, I hope it will be so. But even that can't be without his blood, can it? Because all our service, all our obedience, all our prayers, all our evangelism, everything we are, everything we do, is only in him and through him.

Through his unblemished life given for us. Through his unblemished life lived out through us by his Holy Spirit. The Spirit he gives to all who obey him.

Being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation and the source of eternal service too. To all who obey him.

So if we are to have greater ambition for him, it really means, doesn't it, greater ambition to be truly his every day. To be coming constantly to him, our priest and apostle.

To be clothed with his glory. To be bearing his name. To be laying our lives constantly in gladness before him. So that filled with his Spirit, we will truly worship the King.

[46 : 16] That's where our personal, eternal restoration begins. And that's where it goes on every single day of our lives. And forever.

Filled with his Spirit, we worship the King. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you. that we have such a great salvation and so much better and so much greater even than these great heroes of the faith to whom we look as a right example of how to live and to follow you and run the race.

But how we praise you for all the good things that they longed for. But which have now come for us in such a wonderful way through our Lord Jesus Christ.

putting us personally in touch always, forever with the very throne room of heaven. So that every one of us from the greatest to the least we come into your presence with joy knowing our sins are forgiven and you remember them no more forever.

So help us, Lord, to rejoice in our service and to serve you truly in our rejoicing that we may glorify our great King and Savior until the day at last when we see his face.

[47 : 47] For we ask it in his name. Amen.