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Sermon Notes

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## **“This Far You May Come... and No Farther!”**

**Hebrews 9:6-10**

Significant Walls in History:

- 1) Hadrian's wall: Built in the years AD 122 by the Roman commander in Britain to mark the northernmost extent of the Roman Empire and “to separate Romans from barbarians”
- 2) The Great Wall of China: Built in primarily during the Ming Dynasty (14-17<sup>th</sup> centuries) to keep the Mongol raiders out of China; one of the most astonishing structures in the history of mankind... 5500 miles long, generally 25 feet in height; but INEFFECTIVE because it was not continuous... the Mongels just rode around it!
- 3) Berlin Wall: Built in 1961 during the Cold War after WWII, the struggle between the West and the Communist powers centered in the USSR; the wall surrounded West Berlin and sought to keep people from escaping to freedom; this wall was also ineffective for as many as 5000 people still managed to escape in the following years

All of these walls (and many others beside in history) were built for one purpose: to control the movement of people; to keep an unwanted people from moving too close to a goal they may desire but which the wall builder does not want them to have

The wall would be unnecessary if the no one wanted to go there! It is based on the strong desire a people MAY HAVE to getting somewhere, a desire which the wall prevents them from achieving

No barrier in human history, however, has been as significant and forbidding as the barrier God Himself erected between sinful humans and His own holy presence!!

The first indications of this barrier were found in the Garden of Eden, after Adam had sinned and eaten from the tree. God drove the man and his wife from the Garden:

***Genesis 3:24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.***

The way into the tree of life and the presence of God is BLOCKED!!! THUS FAR YOU MAY COME AND NO FARTHER!!!

When God called Moses to go as His representative, He did so with an amazing sight: the burning bush... Moses was incredibly ATTRACTED to that sight and said "I will go over to see this amazing sight... why the bush is on fire but is not consumed!" God thus ATTRACTED Moses to Himself with His amazing holy power; but after calling Moses' name, the first words God ever spoke to Moses on that mountain were these:

***Exodus 3:5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."***

That in a nutshell is the mystery of the Old Covenant... COME HERE... BUT DO NOT COME ANY CLOSER!!!

The next significant wall was the barrier at the base of Mount Sinai

***Exodus 19:12 Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.'***

This is the exact same thing! God attracts the people to Him by His awesome display of supernatural power, descending on the Mountain in cloud and fire and darkness and earthquake... but then forbidding that sinful people to come close to Him by erecting a barrier... a wall of some sort... to keep the people away!

THUS FAR YOU MAY COME, AND NO FARTHER!!

This lesson was strengthened by this exchange:

***Exodus 19:21-25 the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish." <sup>22</sup> Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them." <sup>23</sup> Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy.'" <sup>24</sup> The LORD replied, "Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the LORD, or he will break out against them." <sup>25</sup> So Moses went down to the people and told them.***

Then God desired to appear to the leaders of Israel, to the seventy elders; but first He gave strict orders about this:

***Exodus 24:1-2 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, <sup>2</sup> but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him."***

That's it!! "WORSHIP AT A DISTANCE!!!!" THUS FAR YOU MAY COME, AND NO FARTHER!!!" That's the Old Covenant in a nutshell.

Then God set up the Tabernacle under Moses... it was made of flimsy curtains of linen on moveable stands of acacia wood poles and bases of silver... it set up a perimeter for the entire Tabernacle... the place where animal sacrifice would be made to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for the sins of the people

These linen curtains and acacia wood poles could be easily knocked over or destroyed by powerful warriors... but their lesson was clear enough:

THUS FAR YOU MAY COME, AND NO FARTHER!!

This principle is the central issue of today's sermon: why God established this barrier, and how in Christ it is REMOVED!!

During the days of the Old Covenant, the laws of Moses surrounding the work of the Tabernacle had one central message:

***Hebrews 9:8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.***

It all pointed to a NEW DAY when at last the desires of our hearts would be consummated: the way for sinners to enter into the presence of the Holy God would at last be made

Our text calls it,

***Hebrews 9:10 ... the time of the new order.***

Context:

- 1) The Author's overall purpose here: to prove that the Old Covenant the Lord God made with Israel at Sinai, with all of its ordinances for worship and all its responsibilities and privileges had been ABOLISHED FOREVER, superseded by the New Covenant, established in Christ's blood
- 2) This New Covenant which God had established was infinitely superior to the Old Covenant
- 3) The chief obstacle for the Jews: their failure to perceive that the Old Covenant ceremonial law—the tabernacle, the priesthood, the animal sacrifices—were merely SYMBOLIC, types, shadows, analogies, living parables, waiting for the fulfillment of Christ; when Christ came, they were instantly OBSOLETE

The connecting link with Hebrews 8: the Old Covenant is OBSOLETE and will soon pass away:

***Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear***

Overview of Hebrews 9-10:

The Author has established Christ as a superior priest, and that He has established a superior covenant

He now turns to address the superior SACRIFICE the Son offers... he zeroes in on the actual activity of the Old Covenant priests – their work in the tabernacle offering animal blood for sins

In this chapter, the superiority of Christ's sacrifice is established on the following grounds:

- 1) The place of the offering was in heaven rather than earth
- 2) The blood of the sacrifice was his own rather than that of animals
- 3) His offering was ONCE FOR ALL rather than endlessly repeated

The author will begin (vss. 1-10) by reminding his hearers of the earthly sanctuary of the Levitical priests... he will just mention in a few verses some details that would have been very familiar to those Jews... he does not intend to go into a specific detailed discussion, but rather to set the general idea: the tabernacle was only established as a symbol of Christ

I. Last Week: The Tabernacle—Established by God as Merely a Symbol

***Hebrews 9:1-2 Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup> A tabernacle was set up.***

- A. The Tabernacle: Established by God for His Glory
- B. An Earthly Sanctuary, Man-Made and Temporary
- C. A Divided Sanctuary: Holy and Most Holy Place
- D. Three Symbols in the Holy Place

***Hebrews 9:2 In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place.***

- E. Seven Symbols in the Most Holy Place

***Hebrews 9:3-5 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, <sup>4</sup> which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. <sup>5</sup> Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover.***

F. Detailed Discussion Unnecessary

***Hebrews 9:5 But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.***

## II. The Priestly Ministry: Established by God But Ineffective

***Hebrews 9:6-10 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. <sup>7</sup> But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. <sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup> This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup> They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.***

### A. The Physical Arrangements Were Achieved... Now the Time for Ministry

1. The Tabernacle was established to be USED... it was not merely a physical museum
2. *Pilgrim's Progress*: Interpreter's House has lots of elements designed to teach pilgrims spiritual lessons necessary for the journey; but they were as though a museum exhibit
3. God set up in the Tabernacle a physical arrangement with actual artifacts which had symbolic meaning
4. God meant for these things to be USED, active living and employed in an ongoing physical ministry by living priests
5. BUT it was all meant for teaching... no real ministry occurred by means of the blood of animals that was the central issue of the Tabernacle!

### B. The Priests Entered Regularly

***Vs. 6: "The priests entered regularly into the OUTER ROOM to carry on their ministry"***

1. There was incessant work to be done by these priests... the morning and evening sacrifices had to be offered

2. The freewill offerings and sin offerings and grain offerings and thank offerings and fellowship offerings all had to be made
3. It was a BEEHIVE of activity... and all of it was carried on DAY AFTER DAY... but the author's point here is the LOCATION of these symbolic sacrifices... it was in the OUTER ROOM

#### C. Outer Room and Inner Room: Restricted Access!

1. The outer room was called the "Holy Place"... it was restricted only to the Levites and their priestly class
2. Ordinary Israelites were not permitted to enter it on ANY DAY, not ever... or they would be put to death
3. The flimsy linen curtain hanging by silver rings on acacia wood poles was effective to keep all but the priests away from close proximity to God!!
4. But even the priests were forbidden to enter the Most Holy Place
5. There it stood... a perfect cube of curtains: 10 cubits x 10 cubits x 10 cubits... the place where the Ark of the Covenant was, a place of DEATH, not of life for the ordinary priest
6. Probably the priests as they carried on the daily offerings right in the presence of the Holy of Holies every moment of every day... so close they could see it and perhaps touch the curtains that made it up, were most constantly reminded than the ordinary Israelites of the PROHIBITION... the deadly law that forbade them from entering into the presence of Almighty God!!!
7. Only the High Priest could ever enter the Holy of Holies... and that only happened one day a year

#### D. The Day of Atonement (vs. 7)

***Hebrews 9:7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.***

1. The author's point here is the LESSON OF RESTRICTION... the deadly distance our sins have put between us and the living God
2. The common priests were AS EXCLUDED as any sinful Israelite... really, as excluded as any Gentile dog from the Most Holy Place for his whole life...
3. AND EVEN THE HIGH PRIEST HIMSELF was excluded every single day of the year but one... on only one day a year was he permitted to enter

4. That day was the Day of Atonement... described plainly and powerfully in Leviticus 16
5. On that day alone, the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place... but he could only come if brought the BLOOD OF THE SACRIFICE... in effect a clear reminder of the sins which he and the people had committed in ignorance
6. Blood sacrifice
  - a. Another key lesson here that the Tabernacle was teaching was the simple fact (stated later in this chapter)

***Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

- b. The shedding of blood teaches the clear lesson: ALL SIN DESERVES THE DEATH PENALTY
- c. Not even the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies without a blood sacrifice for himself
- d. According to the Laws of Moses (Leviticus 16), on the Day of Atonement, the priest was required to sacrifice a bull for his own sins and those of his household... he then carried this blood into the Most Holy Place first and sprinkled it in front of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant for his own sins
- e. Then the priest went back out to the altar in the Holy Place and sacrificed the goat for the sins of the people and carried that blood back into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat for the people
7. The author specifies that the blood sacrifice was made for “sins the people had committed IN IGNORANCE”
  - a. Some (the Socinians) have taught that this was clear evidence that there was NO FORGIVENESS for willful sins in the Old Covenant... only for sins committed in ignorance... you didn’t know what the law was and you violated it
  - b. THIS IS FALSE...
    - i) first, there was no ACTUAL FORGIVENESS for ANY SINS by the blood of animals anyway!!
    - ii) Second, the word “ignorance” simply means that we do not know God or His laws as we should... it is because of our FAULTY MINDS, our IGNORANT THINKING that we sin in every case

iii) Scripture calls all sins by this same name in other passages of the Old Testament

iv) If we KNEW GOD as we should, we would not sin as we do

*RSV John 17:25 O righteous Father, the world has not known you!!*

v) So the High Priest offers blood for himself and for the sins the people have committed in their IGNORANCE OF GOD

8. So... even the High Priest was constantly reminded of this one fact: YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE as a sinner!!

9. And yet, God was showing that there would SOMEDAY be a way into the very presence of God... why else would He have established something so elaborate that brings us so close and yet so far?

### III. The Holy Spirit's Lesson: The Way In Not Yet Revealed

*Hebrews 9:8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.*

#### A. The Holy Spirit's Teaching Tool

1. The Author ascribes the lessons of the Tabernacle to the people of that day
2. During THOSE DAYS (note the past tense), the Holy Spirit was using the Tabernacle and the Priesthood to teach some important lessons
3. The Spirit is constantly active as a teacher!!
4. The Holy Spirit made it plain to King David the limitations of the animal sacrificial system
5. So also the Holy Spirit made it plain to King Solomon that the Most High does not live in houses built by men
6. Every time the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place, into a cubic tent made of linen, the Holy Spirit was speaking to sensitive hearts one clear lesson

*The way into the Most Holy Place has not yet been disclosed*

#### B. The Way Into the Most Holy Place

1. The "First Tabernacle" referred to the man-made tent built by Moses



2. The TRUE TABERNACLE was God's actual dwelling place... high and lifted up above the heavenly realms
3. And that way had NOT YET BEEN DISCLOSED
4. Now, the Tabernacle implied plainly that there IS ad way into the Most Holy Place... but it isn't by means of endlessly repeated animal sacrifices that accomplish nothing
5. There IS a way into the presence of the Thrice-Holy God... a way by which sinners like you and me can stand in the presence of such a God and not be destroyed

#### C. BUT the Way Had NOT YET Been DISCLOSED

1. The word "disclosed" speaks of a secret that is yet to be revealed
2. Many of the most precious aspects of Christ's ministry were secrets hidden for long ages past but then revealed at the right time when Jesus came
3. Every time the High Priest sacrificed a bull or goat and brought it with fear and trembling into the Most Holy Place and poured it out on the Mercy Seat, he was acting out a drama orchestrated by the Holy Spirit
4. THERE IS A WAY INTO GOD, BUT THIS IS NOT IT!!!

#### D. There Was A DEEPER Proof of the Inadequacy of the Old Covenant

### IV. Unable to Clear the Conscience of the Worshiper

***Hebrews 9:9-10 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. <sup>10</sup> They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.***

#### A. The Tabernacle is an "Illustration"

1. Other translations: "parable", "symbolic", "a figure"
2. The tabernacle and the priestly ministry was a spiritual SYMBOL... an acted out parable... a living ILLUSTRATION

#### B. The Lesson is for "THIS PRESENT TIME"

1. The Author says now is exactly the time when we need to know this lesson the most
2. During the first few years after Jesus died and rose and ascended, when the animal sacrifices were still going on, the first century Jewish Christians

needed to know more than any other generation of Christians: the Old Covenant was INADEQUATE... it was OBSOLETE and AGING and would SOON DISAPPEAR

3. SO ALSO, for us, two thousand years later... this illustration is for us as well, who still struggle with a guilty conscience
4. The lessons of the Tabernacle are clear: only the blood of Jesus is effective in cleansing a guilty conscience

#### C. The Accusations of a Guilty Conscience

1. We'll talk more next time about the plague of a guilty conscience
2. However, there are few things as devastating as this... the accusations of conscience...
3. The sinner has violated the commands of God
  - a. Perhaps he has coveted his neighbor's house or land or wife
  - b. Perhaps he has stolen or lied or secretly been enticed toward some idolatrous affection
  - c. Perhaps like David he has committed adultery and had a man murdered to cover it up
4. The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on some gold box cannot really cleanse a sinner's conscience

#### D. The Ineffectiveness of the Old Covenant

***Vs. 9-10 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations***

1. The gifts and sacrifices of the Old Covenant were all symbolic
2. They had no power to cleanse the guilty conscience
3. The High Priest who offered them knew he was just as guilty after he offered them as he was before

#### E. Until the Time of Reformation

***Hebrews 9:10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.***

1. The author mentions something called the “time of the reformation”... the time when God would establish a new order of things
2. Until God should make the Old Covenant obsolete, these EXTERNAL REGULATIONS were in effect and had to be obeyed
3. But with the “time of the reformation” God makes a New Covenant in the blood of Jesus
  - a. The word “reformation” = a time of “correction”
  - b. “Correction” is needed when a building is in disrepair, or when an account was in arrears or a law proved to be ineffective
  - c. That is exactly the situation here: the LAW of MOSES was ineffective in making the people of God holy for heaven...

***Hebrews 7:18-19 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless<sup>19</sup> (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.***

4. The time of the New Order in Jesus Christ has come!!!

## V. The Good News: The Way In Has Been Revealed in Christ!!

- A. The Old Tent Has Been Replaced... by the Body of Christ
- B. The Most Holy Place is the Actual Dwelling Place of Almighty God
- C. The Blood of the Sacrifice is the True Blood of Jesus Christ
- D. It Has Been Offered Once for All for Sinners Like Us
- E. The “Way” into God’s Place is Now Open Forever!!
- F. God No Longer Says to Us “Thus far you may come and no farther”

***Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,<sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God,<sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.***

## VI. Applications

- A. Marvel at the Teaching Ministry of the Holy Spirit

- B. Learn the Various Symbolic Lessons of the Tabernacle
- C. Celebrate the Powerful Fulfillment in Christ
- D. Trust in the Finished Work of Christ
- E. Allow Your Conscience to be Cleansed
- F. Draw Near to God Every Day