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Sermon Notes

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The Freedom of a Cleansed Conscience

Hebrews 9:11-14

O the wretched power of a guilty conscience... how much it assaults and torments sinners like you and me!!

Here today you will hear a message that presents the only power there is in the universe to cleanse a guilty conscience

In human experience, in literature, the power of a guilty conscience is often the centerpiece of the story:

In Shakespeare's tragedy MacBeth: Lady MacBeth goads her husband into murdering Duncan to gain the throne for himself; she assures the weak and fearful MacBeth that "a little bit of water shall clear us of the deed" But her conscience does not find it so easily rid of; after the murder, she is found sleepwalking, night after night, anxiously rubbing her hands as if cleaning them, saying, "Out damn spot! Out, I say! Who would have thought that the old man had so much blood in him?" In the end, she commits suicide because she cannot face her guilty conscience

Edgar Allen Poe, "The Telltale Heart": grisly story of a murder, and the murderer has successfully concealed the victim's body in his house; but when a policeman comes over to investigate the sounds a neighbor heard, and during the mild inquiry the murderer hears ever louder the beating of the dead man's heart... in the end, he cannot stand the sound anymore and rips open the floorboards to reveal the place where the body lay

Every day, we are surrounded by people tormented secretly by a guilty conscience... deeper... YOU may be such a person!!

The text today tells us of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse a guilty conscience so that we can serve the living God!!

Context:

- In some ways the high point and centerpiece of the entire Epistle!!

- The author is writing to Jews who had made some outward profession of faith in Christ but who were under immense pressure—persecution—to forsake Christ and return to Old Covenant Judaism
- The Holy Spirit uses their immediate and temporary plight to teach a succeeding generations of Christians VITAL LESSONS about the salvation Christ came to work
- More generally, the Holy Spirit is also using their plight to teach us all how the Old Covenant has been completely fulfilled and superseded by the New Covenant Christ came to establish
- In this way, we have both an explanation of the Old Covenant, and the clear command to move beyond it
- It explains both why the Lord established the Old Covenant, with its animal sacrifices, and why those sacrifices are no longer acceptable or needed today
- Without Hebrews, we might be wondering what all that was about in the Old Testament... the Bible itself might seem like a disjointed book with no real cohesion
- Instead, because of this vital lynchpin—this magnificent Book of Hebrews—everything fits together and makes sense
- The author has been tracing out the superiority of Christ throughout the Letter... Christ is superior to:
 - The Old Testament prophets who spoke at many times and in various ways, when Christ is God's final word to the human race
 - The angels who mediated the Old Covenant, but who were merely servants serving God's people
 - Moses who was merely a servant in God's house establishing the Old Covenant which could never save a single sinner from sin
 - Joshua who merely brought Israel temporarily into Palestine under the legal strictures of the Old Covenant
 - Aaron who was merely a sinful priest offering symbolic sacrifices that had no real power to remove sin
 - Even to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, who paid a tithe to Melchizedek and thus acknowledged the superiority of Christ

- Now the author is settling into the centerpiece of his argument: Jesus is the superior HIGH PRIEST, and His once-for-all sacrifice, offered in the heavenly tabernacle is perfect and achieves the actual redemption of which all those Old Covenant sacrifices were merely pictures
- Hebrews 9:1-10... clear description of the centerpiece of the Old Covenant: The Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices
 - The author described the earthly tent that Moses set up, with its Holy Place and its Most Holy Place
 - The author described the physical articles that were there: in the Holy Place, the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; in the Most Holy Place, the golden altar of incense, the ark of the covenant (in which were a golden jar of manna, Aaron's staff that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant)
 - The cherubim of the Glory over the ark were also mentioned
 - Then the author describes the ongoing ministry of the priests in the tabernacle: the continual (daily) sacrifice of animals in the Holy Place, but the once a year sacrifice of atonement in the Most Holy Place
 - The point of this brief overview was to show the LIMITATIONS of this Old Covenant system

Hebrews 9:8-10 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. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

- The author zeroes in on the consciences of the worshipers... the sense of GUILT that sin leaves was completely UNTOUCHED by these animals... the sinner walked away from the earthly tabernacle feeling guilty still
- Now by way of contrast, he shows the perfect effectiveness of the PRIESTLY MINISTRY of JESUS CHRIST... all of these are set against the INEFFECTIVENESS of the Old Covenant sacrificial system
 - the perfect **place** of His ministry: heaven itself... not merely an earthly man-made tent
 - the perfect **means** of His ministry: His precious blood... not merely the blood of bulls and goats

- the perfect **achievement** of His ministry: eternal redemption... which the Old Covenant merely symbolized
- the perfect **effectiveness** of His ministry: cleansed consciences... which the Old Covenant had no power to accomplish
- the perfect **end result** of His ministry: our service to the living God from the heart

I. The Perfect Place: Heavenly, Not Earthly (vs. 11)

Hebrews 9:11 *When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.*

A. When Christ Came as High Priest

1. “Christ” = the title the Author is choosing to use here
 - a. The word means “anointed one”
 - b. Later he will mention the “eternal Spirit”... the anointing was always a picture of the Spirit’s work in setting apart a man for special service
 - c. Christ’s three roles: prophet, priest, king
 - d. All three roles in the Old Covenant were ANOINTED roles
 - i) Kings were anointed for their office: Saul, David, and Solomon all had the anointing oil poured over them
 - ii) Prophets were anointed for their office: Elijah anointed Elisha to be his successor as prophet
 - iii) Priests were anointed for their office: Aaron had the sacred anointing oil poured over him
 - e. Here the focus was on Jesus as the ANOINTED HIGH PRIEST
2. When Christ CAME (appeared)
 - a. Greek word is intensive... arrived, appeared
 - b. Somewhat like his ARRIVAL as our high priest is announced with a flourish of trumpets

- c. It could refer to His incarnation and birth, appearing on earth in a human body
- d. Or it could refer to the time of Christ's public appearance at His baptism, when John the Baptist pointed at Him and said

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

- e. BUT HERE it seems to indicate Christ's arrival at His final destination... His perfect HEAVENLY DESTINATION
- f. Christ appeared in HEAVEN for us as our Great High Priest

B. The Good Things That Are Already Here

1. Here the author speaks of the achievement of Christ's ministry as our Great High Priest
2. By the time the author puts pen to paper to write this great Letter to the Hebrews, the “Good Things” Christ came to bring are ALREADY HERE!!!
3. This is the New Covenant with all its magnificent blessings
 - a. “eternal redemption” of verse 12
 - b. The “promised eternal inheritance” of verse 15
 - c. OR as Ephesians 1:3 puts it

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

C. He Went Through (Entered)

1. Here we have as the backdrop that magnificent “Day of Atonement” ritual of verse 7 and of Leviticus 16

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.

Leviticus 16:15-16 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶ In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been.

2. The word here is “went through”... as if it says “passed through”

ESV Hebrews 4:14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need-- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

3. The author is referring to the heavenly realms, the heavenly dwelling place of God

D. The Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle

This is all by way of CONTRAST to the man-made, earthly tabernacle of the Old Covenant... that moveable TENT God commanded to be made as a picture of the heavenly dwelling place of God, where God and man can meet

The author says Jesus' PLACE of ministry is infinitely superior to that tent

1. Greater
2. More perfect
3. Not man-made
4. Not a part of this creation

Hebrews 1:11-12 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹² You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

In this way alone it could fulfill its purpose of leading sinful humanity into intimate face-to-face fellowship with a holy God!!

As we said earlier, this also points to Christ's HUMAN BODY as the final, more perfect tabernacle by which a sinful human race can come into the heavenly realms and stand in the presence of God

E. Heaven Itself: The Immediate Presence of the Living God

II. The Perfect Sacrifice: Christ's Own Blood (vs. 12)

Hebrews 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood

A. The Question: By What MEANS Did Christ Enter?

1. It asks the question HOW...
2. By what means did Christ as OUR HIGH PRIEST enter into the heavenly HOLY of HOLIES and stand before God on our behalf??

3. How could it be done??

B. Issue: the Perfect Holiness of God a Restriction for Sinners

1. God's perfect holiness and our wretched sinfulness is the issue here
2. Hebrews will tell us that our God is a consuming fire... a terrifying being before whom no one can stand, in whose eyes no one is pure
3. He is the living God, the ruler of the universe, sitting on a dreadful throne of fire from which flows a river of fire

C. The Contrast: The Blood of Animals vs. the Blood of Christ

1. He did NOT enter by means of the blood of BULLS and CALVES
2. It was NOT by animal blood that our Great High Priest stood before God on our behalf... He did not present that ineffective symbolic blood to God for our sins
3. But rather it was BY HIS OWN blood
4. By MEANS OF His own blood
5. Thus the blood was the means, the effective agent of entry by which He stood before God

D. The Necessity of Blood Sacrifice... Despite Modern Offense

1. "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! OH... precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow... no other fount I know... NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS"
2. We come to the issue of BLOOD

Anthony van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723) a Dutch tradesman who sold fabrics. But in his leisure time, he liked making and using microscopes... although microscopes had been invented about 50 years before his time, they were seen more as toys than as serious scientific devices; it was Leeuwenhoek who first saw and described blood cells and observed the flow of blood cells in capillaries

Since that time, we have developed a great deal of scientific knowledge about blood... but it is not the BIOLOGY of blood that interests us here, but the THEOLOGY of blood

God used blood to atone for life... it was blood poured out, life for life, as a substitute to pay for sin

3. But how could BLOOD do any kind of CLEANSING?
4. In Shakespeare's play, the blood was a filthy stain that Lady MacBeth could not seem to get out
5. Blood stains are frequently the evidence by which modern Crime Scene Investigators are able to nail a criminal
6. BUT when it comes to sin, and the alienation that sin brings in our relationship with a Holy God, only BLOOD can remove sin
7. Clearest statement in the Bible

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

8. The logic behind it: ALL SIN DESERVES THE DEATH PENALTY

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Ezekiel 18:4 The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death

Christ entered on our behalf in the heavenly tabernacle with BLOOD offered as did all the Levitical priests, but it was not by means of the blood of bulls and goats... but rather by means of His own blood

E. The Once-for-All Sacrifice of Christ's Own Blood

1. Once again, we have the phrase "once for all"
2. This is the contrast... the animal sacrifices had to be repeated endlessly because they were INEFFECTIVE
3. Christ died ONCE FOR ALL, a perfect sacrifice

Zechariah 3:9 I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.

F. The Preciousness of Christ's Blood

1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1. The unspeakably precious blood of Christ... the most valuable substance in the history of the human race
2. Value, worth, preciousness related to RARITY and DESIRABILITY and USEFULNESS or ATTRACTIVENESS
3. Gold is precious because it is rare and beautiful as well as useful for jewelry
4. So also diamonds are precious for the exact same reasons: rare and beautiful as well as useful for jewelry (and for scientific purposes)
5. Oil is precious because it is so USEFUL... the most energy efficient fuel known to man
6. Some drugs are among the most precious substances known to man... for example, after Sir Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin's amazing effectiveness in killing bacteria, it was a LONG JOURNEY to actually developing the drug in quantities sufficient for actual use... the early efforts to mass produce penicillin were extremely costly, and the drug was almost unusable because only tiny quantities of it could be produced at a time; the first patient ever to use penicillin was a British man who had cut himself shaving and whose cuts had become severely infected... he was given a dose of penicillin and the cuts immediately began to heal... it looked as if this patient would recover; but the drug did not exist in sufficient quantities for his healing to be completed... in the end, the infection took back over the man's body and he died... IN THOSE DAYS, TO THAT DYING MAN, THE SINGLE MOST PRECIOUS SUBSTANCE IN THE WORLD WAS PENICILLIN!
7. How much more precious is the blood of Christ!!
 - a. Not merely someone's PHYSICAL LIFE hangs in the balance... but our ETERNAL SOULS
 - b. This precious substance, the blood of Christ, atones for sin... it produces FORGIVENESS with almighty God
 - c. This precious blood flowed from Jesus' dying body
 - i) From the wounds in His hands and feet as He hung from the cross, the precious blood flowed
 - ii) From the wounds on His back, where His back had been shredded by the scourge, the precious blood flowed
 - iii) From the wounds on His scalp where the crown of thorns had been crushed into His head, the precious blood flowed

iv) From His side after He died, where the Roman soldier drove a lance into His heart, the precious blood flowed

8. It is BY MEANS of this blood that Christ entered heaven on OUR BEHALF, and by this same means YOU AND I will be welcome as well, if we TRUST IN THAT BLOOD

Romans 3:25 God presented him as a PROPITIATION, through faith in his blood.

- a. Propitiation = a bloody sacrifice that removes the wrath of God
- b. God's aggressive wrath against our sins is removed only one way... through FAITH IN THE BLOOD of Christ

G. By That Perfect Means, Christ Entered the Most Holy Place

H. Modern Sensibilities are Offended ... But We Preach the Blood!!

1. I heard of a "seeker sensitive" church... the central goal of their worship services every week is to make their non-religious guests and visitors feel as comfortable with Christianity as possible
2. A new worship leader at that church did a set of songs centered on the blood of Jesus; the lead pastor actually APOLOGIZED to the people for all the unpleasant BLOOD images
3. Friends, the idea of a bloody Jesus on the cross has NEVER been pleasing to the senses...
4. BUT it is the only means by which we can be saved

Isaiah 52:14-15 Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--¹⁵ so will he sprinkle many nations

III. The Perfect Achievement: Our Eternal Redemption (vs. 12)

Hebrews 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

A. What Did Christ's Blood Achieve?

1. Verse 12 continues with the issue of the actual achievement of Christ's bloody death on the cross
2. What did it accomplish?

3. The priests in the Levitical order may have wondered if their endless sacrifices of animals actually ACHIEVED anything at all

4. But Christ did not wonder about this... His achievement is infinite and clear

B. "Having Obtained Eternal Redemption"

C. What Is "Redemption"?

1. The theme of redemption is huge in the Bible

2. The basic idea is one of rescuing a captive from bondage by the payment of a price

a. Perhaps you could think of KIDNAPPING... and the victim is held for ransom

b. More commonly in the Bible, the image is one of SLAVERY, and the payment of a price to deliver someone from bondage in slavery

c. Sometimes in the Old Testament, the idea is one of an impending judgment from God's holy law, but the payment of a price REDEEMS the individual and allows them to live

d. When God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, He did so by means of ten dreadful plagues... the last was the plague on the firstborn; every firstborn in Egypt died; the implication was clear that the firstborn among the Jews deserved to die as well, but God redeemed the firstborn of Israel by the blood of the Passover sacrifice; FROM THEN ON, God claimed every firstborn of Israel as His own

Exodus 13:15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.

e. The Levites were taken INSTEAD OF the firstborn of all the tribes of Israel... and they served God in the sacrificial system in the place of the firstborn of all the other tribes

f. When God took a census of the nation of Israel, He found that there were 22,273 firstborn males... but only 22,000 Levites... to redeem the additional 273 firstborn males, the payment of a price was required... 5 shekels of silver for each one

g. THAT IS REDEMPTION... the rescue of a captive by the payment of a price

3. Effectively, for us, it means to be bought out from sin to serve a new master

- a. The payment of sin's penalty is ACCOMPLISHED... that means FORGIVENESS of SINS is redemption

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

- b. So also the idea of ownership... we have a new master

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Romans 6:22 you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God

D. What is "Eternal Redemption"?

1. Eternally FORGIVEN... God will NEVER hold our sins against us, even to eternity
2. Eternally OWNED by our new and loving master... Jesus Christ

IV. The Perfect Effectiveness: Our Cleansed Consciences! (vs. 13-14)

Hebrews 9:13-14 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death

A. The Effectiveness of the Old Covenant Sacrifices

1. The author now seeks to address the EFFECTIVENESS of Christ's sacrifice
2. He uses a "how much more" argument...
 - a. If this is true... how much more will that be true
 - b. In this case, he is comparing the effectiveness of the Old Covenant sacrifices for CEREMONIAL CLEANSING
3. In the Old Covenant, certain things made people ceremonially unclean... that is, they were unable to participate in the corporate worship life of the people of God... they were EXCLUDED from the assembly by their uncleanness
 - a. In the Book of Leviticus alone, the word "unclean" appears 124 times
 - b. It was a HUGE issue...
 - c. If you touch the carcass of a dead animal, you became ceremonially unclean

d. If you had an emission of blood or other body fluid, you became ceremonially unclean

e. If you had a running sore or some other disease, you became ceremonially unclean [that is why lepers were perpetually unclean... they could never join in the public worship of Israel]

4. A big part of being a priest was making pronouncements concerning who was clean or unclean

5. Now, the author's point is that the blood of bulls, goats, and the ashes of a heifer were actually EFFECTIVE... they produced a CLEANSING effect that actually DID enable the previously unclean Israelite to worship God

B. "How Much More..."

1. If that is true of a bull, goat, or heifer, HOW MUCH MORE the blood of the spotless SON OF GOD!!!

2. How much more will Jesus' blood cleanse you!!!

C. "Who through the Eternal Spirit Offered Himself Unblemished to God"

1. The "Eternal Spirit" is just another name for the Holy Spirit

2. It points to the eternity of the Triune God... Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

3. Everything Jesus did as our priest, He did by the power of the Holy Spirit

4. It was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin

5. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove on Jesus at His baptism by John

6. It was the Holy Spirit that drove Him out into the desert to be tempted by the devil

7. It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus returned UNBLEMISHED from the temptation to begin His ministry of miracles and preaching

8. It was by the Holy Spirit that He did every miracle He ever did

9. He spoke the word of His Father by the power of the Holy Spirit

10. AND it was by the Eternal Spirit that Jesus died on the cross... by the eternal Spirit he offered Himself unblemished to God

D. The Perfect Effectiveness of Christ's Blood... a DEEP CLEANSING

1. Christ was Himself UNBLEMISHED as He offered Himself to God

2. His blood has the power to make us UNBLEMISHED too... to cleanse us completely from our sins
3. The Old Covenant sacrifices had a certain power to cleanse... Jesus' blood has infinitely more
4. The cleansing here goes to our very hearts... to the internal structure of our souls

E. Guilty Conscience

1. For the second time, the issue of conscience is raised in Hebrews 9
2. We've just been told of the Old Covenant...

Hebrews 9:9 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

3. Conscience is part of our special nature as created in the image of God
4. Conscience does two things
 - a. It exhorts you ahead of time to do what's right and refuse to do what's wrong
 - b. After the fact, conscience JUDGES your actions based on its understanding of right and wrong... it accuses you of wrongdoing, or it commends you for doing right
5. Sin has a defiling effect on the conscience
 - a. Just as touching a dead body in the Old Covenant produced a very real UNCLEANNESNESS physically for the Israelite, so our sins produce in our consciences a very real SPIRITUAL uncleanness
 - b. It is a "guilty conscience"... our conscience accuses us, condemns us as guilty
 - c. We cannot shake the sense of guilt, and of the impending wrath of God for what we have done
6. Adam and Eve both felt guilty after they ate the forbidden fruit and they hid from the sound of God
7. Cain also felt guilty after murdering his brother; that's why he lied to God about him
8. David felt absolutely tortured in his conscience after laying with another man's wife and then having that man murdered to cover up his sin

- a. For over a year, his conscience accused him day and night

Psalm 32:3-4 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

- b. His body wasted away because of the power of a guilty conscience
9. Peter denied Christ three times and after the rooster crowed, he went outside and wept bitterly because of a guilty conscience
 10. Saul of Tarsus was tormented in his heart by the words and example of Stephen, the first martyr... an innocent man whom Saul thought worthy of death; when Jesus confronted him, he said

“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

11. Martin Luther was terrified of God’s righteous judgment... his guilty conscience accused him day and night... he could not shake free of his guilt; he tried to cleanse his conscience by religious deeds but nothing worked

F. The Cause of a Guilty Conscience: Acts that Lead to Death

1. People feel guilty because they ARE guilty
2. The “acts that lead to death” or “dead works” are SINS
3. Every sin deserves the death penalty as we’ve said...
4. Those sins defile your conscience... they make you spiritually unclean before a holy Judge
5. Your conscience tells you that judgment day will result in your eternal condemnation

Hebrews 10:27 a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

G. The Power of the Blood of Christ to Cleanse YOUR GUILTY CONSCIENCE

1. Let’s get personal... if you have committed sins, your conscience is accusing you of those sins right now
2. It could be something you’ve done, even this week, that you know is forbidden by God’s holy law
3. It could be some heart issue... some lust, some covetousness... some hidden bitterness or unforgiveness... your conscience is smiting you, attacking you

4. There is only one remedy to this assault of conscience: the blood of Jesus Christ
5. Or perhaps it is something from YEARS AGO... something you've never forgiven yourself for... something shameful, something you keep hidden in the recesses of your mind, and never utter a word to anyone about...
6. The only power in the universe that can cleanse a guilty conscience is the blood of Jesus Christ

V. The Result: Service to the Living God (vs. 14)

Hebrews 9:14 ... the blood of Christ... cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

A. The End Result: Freed from Guilt to Serve the Living God

1. The word "serve" is "latreuo" which usually means WORSHIP... a service of worship
2. Those who were ceremonially unclean could not WORSHIP God... they were excluded from the assembly
3. In the same way, those with unforgiven sins exclude us from worshiping and serving the living God
4. BUT through faith in the power of Christ's blood, we are FREE... cleansed from all guilt so that we have the right to enter the assembly of the righteous and take our places with the other redeemed in worshiping Christ

B. Is YOUR Conscience Cleansed from Acts that Lead to Death?

1. Non-Christian:
 - a. Perhaps you have never trusted in Christ before now
 - b. Perhaps you have felt so guilty, not knowing how to get free
2. Christian
 - a. It is not only non-Christians who have guilty consciences
 - b. Every time we Christians sin, our conscience smites us, we feel unclean
 - c. We must BELIEVE in the power of Christ's blood to cleanse our guilty consciences as well
 - d. Perhaps you've had an argument with a family member this very morning and you feel defiled and guilty

- e. Perhaps you've violated your conscience in some other way... you have strayed to some website you know God doesn't want you to visit
- f. Perhaps you've overspent on your credit card... buying luxuries or other things beyond your means
- g. Perhaps you've harbored some unforgiveness against someone in this church
- h. You feel GUILTY... but the grace of Christ is like an OCEAN able to cleanse every guilty conscience

C. What Does it Mean to Serve the Living God?

1. Personal worship... day after day, praising God
2. Personal service... deeds done in obedience to God's law
3. A cleansed conscience results in **FREEDOM TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD**