



GRACE CHURCH

The Cost of Inheritance

Hebrews 9:15-22

Grace Church | 1.8.23

It's so good to be back with you and to be opening up the Word of God with you. I've really enjoyed our time in Hebrews—but I know it may often feel like a bit of a flood of information, words, arguments, images, etc. So let me offer this to you this morning: we can take a breath. Studying God's Word together is hard work. We just had our "halftime" of Hebrews as we took a break for Advent, so it's ok if you are a little out of shape. Let me help you by examining where we have been so far.

The main point of Hebrews is this: **Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the final word of reality.** Which is to say, he's the best. All the things God has been doing in history find their end in him. He is the end of the sentence. Nothing better is coming, because he is best. Whatever "great" religious thing the author throws out, he proves again and again Jesus is better: better than angels, better than Moses, better than Abraham, better than Joshua, better than the high priests, better than the temple or tabernacle. Jesus gives a better Word from God, better rest from God, better mediation with God. Even last week in the beginning of chapter 9, pastor Dave began to show us that Jesus is the better way into worship. On and on we could go. Nothing greater is coming, so we could summarize the book of Hebrews with the words of Jesus on the cross: "It is finished."

And what is happening in Hebrews is that the author is laying before us this whole heap of blessings, a growing list of incredible spiritual realities we cannot take for granted. No longer do we need angels to tell us the Words of God, no longer do we have to toil to reach the rest of God, no longer do we have to offer sacrifices through a priest for our guilt, no longer do we have to perpetually clean our hands through religious ritual in order to enter into worship. Because of Jesus, you can live full and happy and free and forgiven, blissfully secure in the truth that you have obtained the very best from God, and are lacking nothing! Here in our text this explanation of blessing is given in **verse 15: we who are called are to receive the "promised eternal inheritance"**.

Perhaps this is the best way to put it of all: a vast, endless inheritance, the same inheritance given to Jesus as the author and ruler of creation, is promised to those who are called to follow him. If you follow Jesus, your name is on the will, God has signed it, promised it, sealed it, made it legally binding. And not only that, but this inheritance is not simply massive, it's *eternal*. You won't get lambasted by estate tax, the house you receive won't need constant repair, the land you get won't deteriorate and lose its value. This inheritance not only sets you up for life, but for eternity. Plenty would kill for that kind of security—and all of it is yours if you are in Jesus.



My point is that if we have been paying attention, it's clear that the rallying cry of Hebrews is not just that "Jesus is best" but also "following Jesus is incredible! It's the best you can get." Following Jesus is like sitting back from the table after the best steak dinner you've ever had in your life. No wants, no needs—just so full and satisfied that you feel as if you may never eat again.

So this crescendo has been growing, an overwhelming flood of finality, and we are invited to partake and feast and enjoy and revel in it. The inheritance is ours. But there is one piece we can often miss: **the cost**. It's a piece that if we are not careful will cause the joys of following Jesus to become less and less flavorful. It's what can happen to anyone who inherits a lavish lifestyle, or what we worry will happen to our kids if we snowplow their way through life. If we forget the **great cost** of our great inheritance, then we will slowly slip into not just ingratitude, but worse: joylessness. You see, it will be impossible for you to enjoy all the great blessings of Christ if you forget what they cost him.

In light of that, I've got two simple points for you this morning: **1) Your Eternal Inheritance Cost Jesus Everything; 2) That Is Exactly How He Planned It.**

Your Eternal Inheritance Cost Jesus Everything,

Let's circle back to **verse 15** here to start with. Our text tells us that Jesus, the "he" in verse 15, is the *mediator of a new covenant*. This is not new language to the book—earlier in chapter 7-8 we saw Jesus as the great priest, who are the ones who are called to act as a go between between God and man. They are like an advocate—one who pleads the case for another. Kids, it's like when you ask Dad to have some extra ice-cream, he says yes, but your not so sure what your mom will think. What do you do? You go back to Dad and have him plead your case for you. So Jesus is the one who is pleading our case always—who stands in the gap for us. And what he is mediating is a new covenant, that is, a new kind of relationship ith God. Of course, God the Father is not the reluctant parent im this metaphor, so it breaks down. But you get the point.

Just last week we saw Jesus enter into the throne room of Heaven as our priest, by means of his own purity, stands before God, and then brings us with him. So we can stand before God in real and right *relationship*. That's the New Covenant: there is no distance between us and God when Jesus is our mediator and advocate.

Because of this mediation, we receive then an "eternal inheritance" in **verse 15**, which is far better than an extra scoop of ice cream. Again, it's all the blessings of God that are his in heaven, which is compared for us in Hebrews to entering into the promised land, a land of milk and honey, a land of rest, a land of inheritance. It's what C.S. Lewis called "The Far Country", basically: all the things your heart has ever longed for, all the things you know you want and need but most of the time can't even define. Scripture calls it: The New Jerusalem, or "The New Earth", or "The City of God", that is, the place where God is. Which one of us doesn't want that?



And as we've already seen in Hebrews, the first covenant, the way of relating to God that involved sacrificial systems and careful observance of the mosaic law—that could give us a picture or taste of the promised inheritance, but since it was not eternal, and not presided over by eternal priests—that covenant could never bring us into our inheritance. So there is the primary difference between these two ways of relating to God, these two covenants: the old one can never bring us our inheritance, and the new one can.

But there is also a striking similarity between the Old and New Covenants. Although the New One is different in what it *does*, it is not different in what it *requires*. This is what the text means in **15-18**. The New Covenant gets us our eternal inheritance because there is a *death*, **verse 15**, that redeems it. So what is required for every covenant relationship is death.

We understand this to be true in several ways. Think of the primary way we make covenants with each other: marriage. Marriage is, in many ways, the death of single life. It's not a partnership where we both agree to cohabitate and work together. It's the joining together of what was two into one. The single man or woman dies, the marriage lives. This is also why in the Old Testament when God makes or affirms a covenant, it is sealed with death and new life. When God makes a covenant with Noah, it requires the death of the wicked world and the new life from the water. When God makes a covenant with Abraham, he cuts an animal in half—then he gives supernatural life from the dead bones of his wife Sarah, who is really really old. And obviously the covenant with Moses stipulated that the way to life with God was the death of a sacrificial animal. In order to receive the new inheritance and blessing, some death of the old must occur.

But there is also another way to describe this, not relationally but legally. Perhaps this will be easier for you to understand. In **verse 16 and 17** the word for “will” is actually the same as “covenant”, but the author is giving us an analogy, not of a relational covenant, but a legal one. Think of a last will and testament. How do you receive an inheritance? The one who wills it to you, called the “testator”, has to die. That is how you inherit. So, **verse 17**.

And this is the author's point in **verses 18-21**. The first covenant was inaugurated with blood, with death. When God laid out his great covenant, speaking to Moses on the mountaintop, he comes down with the law of God and shares it with the people. And look in Exodus 34 what they do:

Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.”

All the people agree—they wanted to cut a covenant with God. They promise to obey God and enter into the relationship with him. Like marriage, they make vows to be faithful to God and he vows to be faithful to them. All that he has will become theirs, they will inherit his blessings, if they keep their vows. But it doesn't stop there: Moses then takes the blood of calves and goats, multiple animals there, a lot of blood, gallons and gallons, and sprinkles it on the book of the law and every



single Israelite. The point is this: death is the cost of a covenant. It's necessary for inheritance. This is true for our legal inheritance rules—but even more so with God. What is required for you, a sinner, to come into relationship with God? What is required for God to commit to you? Well, very simply, it's purity. Why do you think a bride wears white on her wedding day? To symbolize her purity. God is holy. God isn't interested in marrying those stained with sin. He doesn't make covenant with those who are unholy.

Hence the blood. Blood is the purifier—it's the symbol that something precious, a source of life, has been spilt to pay for unholiness. Death for life, pure and innocent blood for impure and unholy sinners. **Verse 22** lays out the principle flawlessly: without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. No forgiveness, no covenant. So for the people of God at Sinai, they had to be sprinkled and washed with blood of the purest animals they had. And not just once, but daily, weekly, yearly—blood had to be spilt.

If you count up all the possible sacrifices of the thousand year institution of the Old Covenant, that equates to more than 1 million animals whose throats were cut. During Passover in Jerusalem, they constructed a trough that flowed from the temple down into the Kidron Temple to dispose of it—a river of blood.¹ Why so much blood? Because there is no inheritance and no covenant without holiness, there is no holiness without forgiveness of sin, and there is no forgiveness of sin without the payment of innocent blood.

What then, does your eternal inheritance cost? What is the payment of eternal forgiveness? What is the price for holiness and purity? What does it take to clothe you in white, to present you blameless before God, that he might covenant with you and grant you everything that is his? It takes death, and it costs blood. But for such a high price, we cannot expect a calf or a goat to pay. No, the only blood that is pure enough to secure your inheritance is the blood of God made flesh, the blood of Jesus.

We don't often think about the cost of things. It's too difficult too, really. Our culture and our economy has made it nearly impossible. Instead of producing difficult, costly things that will last, we are fed cheaply made products that we can dispose of. Usually when a shirt I own gets a hole in it, I get rid of it. Who has the time and skill to repair it, when it would cost nearly as much, if not more, than a cheap new shirt? But say I pay \$300 for a new suit. It's tailored to me, and I only own one, maybe two. A small tear in my suit would not mean I throw it out. A flat tire in my car doesn't mean I take it to the junkyard. Why? Because of the value.

Church, it cost Jesus everything to secure your inheritance. It cost the life of God.

Be very careful that the gospel does not become to you a disposable thing. Because friends, there is nothing more valuable than the blood of Jesus. See him there, upon the cross, as we will sing

¹ Kent Hughes, *Hebrews*



soon, and behold “A Fountain Filled With Blood//Drawn from Emmanuel veins//and sinners plunged beneath that flood/lose all their guilty stains.”

When you truly understand the cost of your inheritance, it will be precious to you. You will take joy in it every day. You can leave this place of worship with a heart ready to explode, in every circumstance you can be *full* and know that following Jesus is not second best. You have found what your heart is looking for, you have punched your ticket to the Far Country—and you know it to be true because the price required to purchase it for you—a payment that didn’t come from you but from God’s perfect hands—is of infinite value! If Christ was willing to die and spill his blood to secure for you an eternal inheritance, if he was willing to give his most precious resource to buy it for you, what value must it be! Heaven must be glorious, to be purchased at such a cost!

But let me address one concern that some of us may have. If it costs Jesus so much to secure an inheritance for us, what happens when we can’t live up to it? We all know the feeling of receiving an extravagant gift and feeling unworthy of it. If Jeff Bezos called you tomorrow and said: “Hey friend, thanks for being such a great Amazon customer. I can really tell you are awesome, so I’ve decided to leave my entire multi-billion dollar company to you”, we wouldn’t feel free—we’d feel burdened. So what do we do with that feeling, when Jesus comes to us and says: “I’ve purchased a great inheritance at an immense cost to myself, and you can have it”, and we feel immediately like “I better not let Jesus down”? Well, that brings me to my second, brief point.

Your Eternal Inheritance Cost Jesus Everything, and
That Is Exactly How He Planned It.

Take a look again at **verses 16-17**. Why does the author use this image of a last will and testament? I think in part it is to help us to remember the intentional heart of Christ towards us. Lest we think that receiving his inheritance is a place of burden and not of rest, he reminds us that we receive not because we must prove ourselves worthy of it, but because he has willed it.

Here is the difference between Jeff Bezos calling you to give you control of Amazon and Jesus calling you to promise you his eternal inheritance: **it was always the plan of God to hand over his best to those unworthy of it.** Bezos would never give his inheritance to you, because you wouldn’t be worthy of it. He would never approve of that. But here is the thing about wills: they are intentional. They only work if they are signed by the author, if they have his stamp of approval. And somehow, behold the wondrous mystery, by sheer grace, through the costly love of Jesus Christ, God has approved of *you*. **Verse 15**, he called *you* to receive. Jesus said in John 10:18: “no one takes my life from me, I lay it down on my own accord”. He willed it, it was intentional, it was planned, it was signed on the dotted line: “Give everything I have to my prodigal son, my wayward daughter!”

God *knows* you are not worthy of it, and yet planned from the very beginning of time to send his Son Jesus Christ to seek you out, carry the good news of your inheritance, promise to provide all the worthiness you need from his own perfection, and even die to purify you to be worthy of it.



So no, you are not worthy to receive all the blessings of God. You will let Jesus down. But he knows that. He planned it that way, because he loves you. As the author of Hebrews will say later in the book, he endured the cross with “joy”. Jesus is not looking down from God’s throne in disappointment that he paid so much for you and you are squandering it. He is continually filled with joy that he gets to share with you, his beloved, all that is his. And he is pleading now your case, making you holy like he is, until that day where you will receive his great inheritance and live with him in pure white, completely unashamed.

Never forget that it cost Jesus everything to bring you to God. Never forget the preciousness of his blood and the glory of his gospel. Value it, cherish it, rejoice in it. But also never forget that It is truly given to you, from the heart of Christ, with no strings attached. He opened his veins freely. That is the way he always wanted it—because he has always loved you.

