

## **Better in Every Way (Hebrews 12:24)**

Hebrews chapter 12. We're going to begin reading at verse 22 and we'll read through verse 24.

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb. 12:22–24 NASB)

We come now to these final items on the list of blessings that have been bestowed upon us in the new covenant. And we come now really to the reason and the means and the surety—the certainty—that these glorious blessings shall be ours. This is the crowning jewel of this list and the author has saved, I think, the best for last.

We've come to Jesus and to the blood sprinkled which speaks better than the blood of Abel. He is the mediator of the new covenant. We have been brought to the city of the living God, verse 22 says. That's true, the heavenly Jerusalem. We have been brought to the gathering of festive angels in this massive assembly which is the worship that goes on in Heaven. That is a blessing. We have been brought to the church of the firstborn; we are therefore the royal children of God by adoption into God's family. All of those are great blessings. And we have been brought even to God Himself, who is the Judge of all. And that is something that—all of those things really are inconceivable in light of the depth of our sin and the hurdle that that presented to us enjoying any of these blessings, let alone even a single one.

But now we have come to Jesus, who is the mediator of the new covenant and the sprinkled blood. And that tells us why it is and how it is that all of these other blessings we get to enjoy. How is it and why is it that we are incorporated into the company of the festive angels and we are brought into the church of the firstborn and we are adopted into the family of God? How is it that we have been secured into this everlasting and eternal city which is ours? How is it that we have been brought and come to all of these things? It is because we have also come to Jesus, who is the mediator of the new covenant, and we have been brought to the blood which is

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sprinkled and speaks better than the blood of Abel. In fact, this growing list, or this massive list of blessings which incorporates blessings present and blessings future, all of it is secured for us by the blood of Christ.

And you will notice the word in verse 24 which returns us to a theme of Hebrews; that is the word *better*. This blood, this sprinkled blood, speaks better than the blood of Abel. That word *better* is used thirteen times in the Book of Hebrews. Thirteen times! It's one of the main themes in Hebrews as Jesus is compared with all of the features and forms of the old covenant and the Old Testament. And at every turn, with every example, with every comparison, we find out that Jesus is better, He is superior, He is more excellent. And this is the thirteenth, the final time that the word *better* is used in the Book of Hebrews.

It has been used to describe the new covenant, which is better than the old; Jesus's sacrifice, which is better than the animals; Jesus's blood, which is better than the blood of bulls and goats; Jesus's priesthood, which is better than the Aaronic priesthood; the new covenant, which is better than the old covenant. That's how the word has been used. And now we come in this final reference to a main theme in the Book of Hebrews. And you know that once we come to the last reference, the last mention of a theme of a book, that we're also coming close to the end of the book. So there's a little bit of hope.

His blood speaks better than the blood of Abel. Now, all of these things mentioned in verse 24—Jesus being a mediator, the new covenant, and the blood—all of that brings us back to themes and ideas that the first ten chapters of the Book of Hebrews expounded at great length. We took the time to go through that comparison, the new covenant and the old covenant, Jesus as a mediator compared to Old Testament priests, His blood compared to the blood of animals. And we took the time to labor through those ten chapters. So in our examination of verse 24 here today, I don't need to recover all of that ground and rehash all of that material because it was ten chapters that we spent looking at those things. So I'm just going to connect some of the dots between this text and some of the things that we have covered in order that we can see why it is that the author at this point mentions these three blessings: we've come to a better mediator who has inaugurated a better covenant with a better blood. And as I said, all three themes were previously mentioned.

So now we can just jump into that outline. That is our outline. We have a better mediator who has inaugurated a better covenant and sealed it with better blood. Better mediator, better covenant, better blood.

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Let's first look in verse 24 at the better mediator. We have come to Jesus, who is "the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel." In this context, Jesus is not the only mediator that is mentioned. There are two other mediators that are mentioned in our context, and there is an intended comparison here, though the author does not use the term *mediator* to speak of Moses or the angels. There is an intended comparison here with those two—Moses and the angels—because there is a sense in which both Moses and the angels served as mediators under the old covenant. If you look up at verse 19:

19 To the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

20 For they could not bear the command, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.'

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" (Heb. 12:19–21 NASB)

And the angels are mentioned in verse 22. And we know from other references in Scripture which I gave you several weeks ago that the angels were involved in some way in mediating the old covenant when it was given at Sinai. Paul mentions this in Galatians chapter 3: "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made" (v. 19). So angels were present at Sinai, and they in some way transferred or mediated the law as it was given to the nation of Israel.

And Moses himself was also a mediator. He was a go-between or a stand-between, between Israel and God. Remember, it was Israel who was not allowed to even approach the base of the mountain, but it was Moses who went up on the mountain and stood there and received the law for Israel. And then Moses brought that law back down and delivered it to the nation of Israel. This is what a mediator does. A mediator is one who delivers something on behalf of another. That's one idea of mediation. And it is that sense in which Moses was a mediator. And then we know also that the angels were somehow involved in the ordaining of the law at Mount Sinai. That ordaining of the law is the event that is described in verse 18 of chapter 12.

There's another meaning to the word *mediator*, and that is one who is an arbitrator or an umpire or a go-between, one who brings two factions together, one who is a reconciler. A mediator is one who stands between two parties and mediates something

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between these two parties to bring two parties together and to execute, as it were, or to negotiate a settlement between two parties. An arbitrator who brings two factions together. And this is the way in which Jesus is also a mediator. He's the mediator of the new covenant because He brings us to God. He stands between the Father and us. And we were at enmity with God, and all of our sin, all of our violation of the law, all of our transgressions, our iniquities, and our guilt stood between us and God. And the necessity was that that hostility needed to be dealt with. God was rightly angry with us because we had offended His law and violated His law, and we deserved His wrath. That wrath had to be satisfied. That hostility had to be taken away. And the enmity—the division between the Father and us—had to be reconciled and had to be glossed over to be dealt with. And that is what the Lord Jesus does as a mediator. He is an arbitrator between Yahweh and between us.

And being One who is both God and man, He is the perfect mediator. For He is able to stand between the One who is God and lay His hand, as it were, upon Yahweh, and being infinitely and fully righteous, He is able to then stand and lay His hand upon us, man, and act as our representative in terms of His sacrifice and as God's representative in terms of satisfying His wrath. And He is able to atone for our sin on the cross and thus bring us together so that He has reconciled us to the Father through His death on the cross. And He is therefore a mediator.

Now, Moses didn't do that as a mediator. Moses didn't remove enmity. Moses revealed our enmity. When the law came, we saw sin, and we knew sin. And when God said, "Thou shalt not," we said, "But I have. I'm guilty." And then God said, "Thou shalt not," and I've done that too, and I'm guilty. And "Thou shalt not," and I've done that too, and I am guilty. So far from removing the hostility or the enmity, the old covenant and Moses as a mediator simply revealed our hostility. It revealed our sin, and the justice, and what that justice would look like if God were to pour out His wrath upon sin.

But Jesus is a better mediator, superior. He occupies a better priesthood, which is an eternal priesthood. He has offered a better blood, He has offered a better sacrifice, He is a better priest, He provides a better intercession. Hebrews 7:15: ". . . if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life" (vv. 15–16). That's what makes Him a better priest; He has an indestructible life.

Hebrews 7:25: "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Because He is a

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perfect intercessor, because He stands between us and the Father, He is able to reconcile these two parties, which I think is why the author uses the name Jesus here instead of Christ or even Jesus Christ. Jesus is the name of His humanity. Remember, the angel told Joseph, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). What do you name this One who is a genuine, true man? His human name is Jesus. The office that He occupies, the office of His divinity or His messiahship, is Christ, but His human name is Jesus.

So we now come to Jesus, who is the perfect mediator, the One who can stand as perfectly righteous and represent us to the Father. He is a better mediator than Moses. Moses brought Israel to Sinai, and the law came through Moses. Christ brings us to Zion, and grace and truth come to us through Him. Moses did not remove enmity, but Christ does. He's a better mediator.

Second, He has inaugurated a better covenant. Verse 24, He's the mediator of a new covenant. We have been brought “to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.” There's a contrast here again, with—and I'll just remind you of it, verses 18–21—Sinai. That was the initiation or the inauguration of the old covenant, the Mosaic covenant, where God gave the law to Moses and instituted a priesthood and a priestly class and sacrifices and gave instructions for the tabernacle and the way in which sinners would approach God through the basis of a blood sacrifice. All of that was inaugurated at Sinai. And now we are told here that Jesus has initiated or inaugurated a better covenant. It is also a new covenant. That's the word that's used here, new covenant. It's described elsewhere in Hebrews as a better covenant.

Now, oftentimes things that are new are not necessarily better. Are you familiar with that? You might get a new phone, but it might not be as good as your previous phone. Take New Coke, for instance. Everybody that's over thirty-five or so remembers the debacle that was New Coke. New Coke was not necessarily better than Coke Classic. Things that are new are not necessarily better than things that are old. But in terms of the covenant, this covenant—the new covenant—was far superior to the old covenant in every way. It's better in every way.

Hebrews 8:8: “For finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel.’”

Hebrews 8:13: “When He said, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.”

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Hebrews 9:15 says, “For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The old covenant is obsolete. And here's something to remember; we covered this back in chapter 8. When God says that He is inaugurating and creating and bringing to us a new covenant, He is not describing the old covenant with all of its forms and features with something just added onto it, like an appendix, or like you hook a trailer onto something else. He's talking about one thing, the old covenant that has been taken away and made obsolete and has been replaced by something entirely new and entirely better. It is a new covenant and a better covenant.

So we don't take the law of Moses and all the stipulations of it and just simply attach Christ to that like you might just throw on an extra layer of clothing or something. That old covenant is entirely done away with, and something new and far superior has come. The old covenant could not make us righteous. It could not take away sin. It could not mediate a relationship to God in the sense of bringing us near. Do you remember that with the old covenant there was the veil that stood between the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat on top of that and the outside of the temple, and that on one day a year only one man of all of Israel got to step behind that and apply the blood of the sacrifice to the mercy seat? At no point ever under the old covenant did people ever feel like they could draw near to God in the way that you and I can. But now the veil has been torn in two, and the blood has been applied, and forgiveness has been purchased by the blood of Christ. And now we can draw near, and we can draw near freely, and we can draw near forever. So, far superior. The old covenant revealed your sin, the new covenant reveals the source of your righteousness. The old covenant made your sin known, and the new covenant provides us righteousness. The old covenant called for your damnation, the new covenant provides a payment for your sins so that you will not be damned. The old covenant kept you at a distance, the new covenant draws you near.

Every blessing that is listed here in verses 22–24—every last one of them—has been purchased by the blood of the new covenant, by the blood of the sacrifice of the new covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. So if God has spilled His own blood, the blood of His own Son, in order to purchase all of these blessings for you, then “how will He not also with Him freely give [you] all things?” (Rom. 8:32) Give you *all* things. Give you victory over your besetting sin, the strength to say no, the strength and the grace to resist

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temptation, deliverance from your guilt, strength to obey and pursue holiness and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. All of that is provided in the new covenant.

Third, this is sealed by a better blood. We have a better mediator and a better covenant. These things we understand. It is sealed now by a better blood. This is an intriguing statement. We have been brought to the sprinkled blood, verse 24, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. A sprinkled blood, that describes—that is the language, by the way, of sacrifice. Sprinkled blood, not just blood poured out, not just blood spent, something like that. But the language of sprinkled blood is the Old Testament language of sacrifice, of blood that has been applied. And it is the picture of the Day of Atonement on Yom Kippur, which I mentioned just earlier, a few minutes ago, where one man, the high priest, would enter into the tabernacle on one day of the year, the Day of Atonement. It was the highest holy day of the nation of Israel. And he would take the blood of the animal that was offered outside of the tabernacle, and he would step behind the curtain, and he would apply that to the mercy seat above the broken law which was contained in the ark of the covenant, and he would do that not by pouring, but he would sprinkle the blood on that mercy seat. So the reference here to sprinkled blood speaks of a blood that is applied. It speaks to the blood of a sacrifice. That's what's being described. He's not just describing blood in the sense of blood but a blood that was shed as a sacrifice and as an offering to atone for sin. Hebrews chapter 9, verse 11:

11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;

12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,

14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:11–14 NASB)

Hear the contrast there between the old tabernacle and the new tabernacle, which is Christ; the old sacrifice and the new sacrifice; the blood sprinkled then, the blood sprinkled now. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 11:

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11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,

13 waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.  
(Heb. 10:11–14 NASB)

That is glorious truth. All the Old Testament priests could come in and offer blood after blood after blood, sacrifice after sacrifice, and never even begin to approach paying for sin. It was simply a picture of a full and final payment of sin that was to come. But He, having offered one sacrifice, has perfected, that is, made mature or brought to an end and completed, the salvation for all time of those who are sanctified. This is the language of blood applied. Under the old covenant, sacrifice was not complete and a priest had not done his job until the blood was applied where the blood needed to be applied.

Do you remember Yom Kippur? It wasn't enough for the priest to offer the sacrifice outside of the tabernacle and then leave the blood there. It wasn't enough for him to do that and to burn incense and do everything else. He had to take that blood behind the veil and apply it to the mercy seat. That was what was required. On the night of Passover, it wouldn't have been enough if the children of Israel had slaughtered the Passover lamb and roasted its flesh and eaten it with all of the accoutrements that went with the Passover meal and followed all of the instructions. If they had not applied the blood to the doorposts, they would have been executed on the night of the Passover. The blood had to be applied.

So here is the question for you: has His blood been applied to you? Or do you simply observe the glories of that sacrifice from a distance? Do you admire His love and His grace, that a Man would die for His enemies? And do you admire the love and the grace that is poured out in the hearts of others? Do you simply acknowledge mentally that, yes, a sacrifice was needed, and that sacrifice was sufficient, but I really don't want any part of that? Or has the blood of His sacrifice been applied to you? Another way of asking that is have you been born again, and are you covered by the blood of His sacrifice?

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If you are not covered by the blood of Christ, and if that blood has not been applied to your account, evidenced by your repentance and your faith, then you will admire the virtues of that sacrifice from afar until the day of your judgment. It must be applied to you. It must cover you. And the evidence of that will be your repentance and your faith.

These two things—Christ and His sacrifice; Jesus as the mediator, and the blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel—these two things are inseparable because one describes His person (He is the Mediator) and the other describes His work. He has sprinkled blood, He has offered a sacrifice, and to come to Him and receive any of the blessings in verses 22–24 is to receive all of those blessings that have been purchased by and only by the blood of Christ. If your sin has not been paid for by His atoning sacrifice and if His blood has not been applied to your account, then you have no part in Him and no part in His grace. Know that for sure. He's not your life coach, He's not your therapist, He's not your inspiration, He's not your daily chicken soup for your soul. If He is not your atonement, He is your judge. If He is not your payment for sin, He will damn you in it. Those are your two options. Has that blood been applied to you?

Even the mention of sprinkled blood here connects us back again to Sinai because blood is involved there as well at the inauguration of that first covenant. It's not mentioned in verses 18–21, but it doesn't need to be because it's mentioned in the Old Testament record that describes the events that took place at Mount Sinai. Hebrews chapter 9 mentions it, beginning at verse 18:

18 Therefore even the first covenant [by the way, this is the giving of that covenant that is mentioned here or described here in verses 18–21] was not inaugurated without blood.

19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled [listen to that reference] both the book itself and all the people,

20 saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.'

21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.

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22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. (Heb. 9:18–22 NASB)

The reference to sprinkling there was the first covenant because at the giving of the first covenant, Moses and the people, though they were filled with fear and trembling, they made that covenant with God and then they sprinkled the people with blood and the book with the blood, sealing and inaugurating that first covenant. Likewise with the second covenant. No covenant is made without the sealing of blood. Likewise with the second covenant there is blood involved, and it is the sprinkling of blood, the sprinkling of God's blood, of God's own Son. Sinai saw the sprinkling of blood, and the sprinkling of blood is involved in the second covenant as well.

Notice verse 24 [in chapter 12]. Now we're getting to this perplexing statement that the sprinkled blood speaks better than the blood of Abel. This is yet another contrast with something at Sinai. Look up at verse 20. There was speaking that took place at Sinai, remember? "For they could not bear the command, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.'" And Moses spoke, verse 21: "And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.'" So there's speaking at Sinai. But it is the speaking that results in fear and trembling. It is the speaking of wrath and judgment and His law.

And then there is a speaking that takes place here by the blood of Christ. And it speaks better than both of those statements. It also speaks better than the blood of Abel. What does it mean here, then, that it speaks better than the blood of Abel? Because that's kind of an odd statement, isn't it? Like, why drag Abel into all of this? He just seems like an innocent bystander in the Old Testament. Why grab one guy who was murdered in the Old Testament, drag him into the narrative, and put his name in here? You might expect the author to say that the blood of Christ sprinkled speaks better than the blood of bulls and goats, and he has said that. Or the blood of animal sacrifices, and he has said that. You could expect him to say that it speaks better than the blood of the Passover lambs or better than the blood of the first covenant. All of that we might expect in this context. Why Abel? In what sense does the blood of Christ speak something better than the blood of Abel? Did you even know that the blood of Abel spoke? Did you know that? Were you even thinking about that this morning while you were brushing your teeth? Oh, the blood of Abel still speaks. No, you didn't think that. That's not something that pops into your mind. Why does the author mention it here?

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He's already made the point that Christ's blood is better than the blood of Old Testament sacrifices. But there is something prophetic going on here now. There is a take on this passage that I do not think is right that I want to make you aware of. There are some people who say that what the author means here is that the blood of Christ's sacrifice speaks something better and superior to the blood of Abel's sacrifice. In other words, Christ's blood speaks better, that the blood of Christ's sacrifice speaks something better than the blood of Abel's sacrifice, describing the blood of the sacrifice that Abel made right before his older brother Cain killed him. So that animal sacrifice. There are some who say that the comparison here is between the animal sacrifice—the blood that Abel spilled in that sacrifice (Gen. 4) is inferior to the blood that Christ sprinkled in His sacrifice for us on the cross. I don't think that that is the way that this should be understood. I think that this should be understood to refer to Abel's blood that was shed on the ground when Cain killed Abel. I think that that is the true take or the right interpretation of that. Abel being the first person ever murdered, his blood was the first blood, first human blood, ever shed. Therefore his blood as the first one that was shed speaks something, I think, symbolic, and something very theologically significant. Being the first blood—human blood—that ever hit the ground, he was the first person murdered.

Now, there are two passages that I think come into play here: one in Genesis chapter 4, one of them back in Hebrews chapter 11. Read the one from Hebrews 11:4 first: “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.” Now there's no mention there of Abel's blood still speaking. But there is a sense in which the author in Hebrews chapter 11 intends for us to understand that the example or the incident of Cain and Abel still speaks to us, particularly that Abel's testimony as a righteous man who was righteous by faith still speaks to us. And there is a reason why Abel is listed somewhat toward the top of that list of Old Testament saints in Hebrews chapter 11, because the author is telling us that we can look to Abel as an example, an illustration of something that is true for all the saints, of all people. That is, that Abel responded to God in obedience and in faith, and he was declared righteous. And the sacrifice that he gave was an evidence of his righteousness and his faith in God. It was an act of obedience. Faith is obedience in worship, and Abel stands as an example of one who is obedient to God, who responds to God in faith.

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But further, he becomes an example of those who are God's by faith, how they are persecuted and hated and hunted and even killed by the wicked throughout all of time. And you see that then all the way through Hebrews 11, that the righteous end up being hunted and hated and rejected by the world. And this became an example of how you and I are to respond to those who are hostile to us. We respond to God by faith, and we respond to others in a gracious way, like the saints in Hebrews chapter 11. So there is a way in which Abel becomes, then, an example who still speaks to us.

But his blood has a prophetic significance in that as a righteous man, he was murdered by the unrighteous. This becomes the tale that is as old as time. Follow it all the way through the Old Testament. The righteous are never on the upside of anything that happens in the Old Testament throughout human history. They are always the ones who are hunted and hated and persecuted. The world responds with hostility, and Abel becomes a prophetic picture of that. He also becomes a prophetic picture of the consequences of sin and that blood—human blood—would eventually be shed because of this sin problem. Now, his blood did not atone for anything; Abel's blood did not. His blood did not atone for anything or pay any price, but it becomes a reminder of the seriousness, the gravity of sin, and something of a picture of a righteous Man who would come, who would end up shedding His blood to pay for sin.

Second, Abel's blood speaks of the need for retribution and justice. The second passage that pertains to this is back in Genesis 4. It's just verse 10. You don't need to turn to that passage, but you can if you want. Chapter 4, verse 10 says—when God confronts Cain for killing Abel, He says, “What have you done? [Listen] The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.” Now, I happen to believe that all innocent blood that is shed in this world calls out to God for justice. That is a heavy thing to consider when you realize that as a nation we have shed a lot of innocent blood. Not just in abortion but also in murder. We've shed a lot of innocent blood. The blood of the innocent cries out to God in Heaven for justice, for vengeance, and for retribution. And it cries out, “How can the guilty go free? How can the murderer walk?” Does not the shedding of one man's blood demand that that man's blood who shed that blood be shed on behalf of that? Doesn't the shedding of the blood of the innocent require or demand that justice be done and that the one who sheds that blood should be punished for it? It does. That goes all the way back to Genesis 9 where, because we are created in the image of God, the death penalty was instituted for those who would shed innocent blood.

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So the blood of Abel cries out, "How can the guilty go free? Why should the murderer walk?" Justice demands a payment. Justice for the shedding of innocent blood must be satisfied. God cannot leave the guilty unpunished. Innocent blood cries in Heaven for vengeance, and innocent blood cries from the ground for vengeance, for retribution, for justice. So Abel's blood did cry to God from the ground, and it cried out for condemnation, for payment. It cried out that Cain was guilty. It cried out for retribution and for justice and for vengeance. That's what Abel's blood speaks. Justice must be done because sin must be avenged. That's what the blood of Abel speaks. It's one of the things.

But what does the blood of Christ speak? "In Him we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. 1:7).

"He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24 ESV).

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). This great exchange.

The blood of Abel speaks of the blood of the One who would come, who would pay the penalty for our sin. The blood of Abel cries out for retribution, and the blood of Christ has satisfied that demand for retribution. So Abel's blood cries that justice must be satisfied, and the blood of Christ cries that justice has been satisfied. The blood of Abel demands that sin be avenged, and the blood of Christ says sin has been avenged for any and all who will trust in Him. The blood of Abel demands that sin be punished, and Christ's blood says He has taken the punishment for all the sin of any and all who will trust in Him.

The blood of Abel cries that Cain should be made a vagabond who flees from the presence of God and has no welcome into His courts, but the blood of Christ says not only are you not a vagabond, but you have been adopted into the Father's family, and you have been invited into His eternal city where you can come and enjoy commerce and fellowship and worship for all of eternity. And you can stay as long as you want, and He will give you the kingdom. For He has satisfied every demand of justice and every demand of your sin's debt against you. He has satisfied it all. He has poured out upon Christ all of the just demands of His wrath, upon Him, so that Christ has borne and drunk the bitter cup that was reserved for you and me. He has drunk it down and absorbed all of God's wrath on behalf of those who will trust in Him. Every last sin that you have ever

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committed, that you have committed today, and that you will ever commit has been poured out and paid for upon Jesus Christ.

So Abel's blood demanded that another die for the crime committed against him. And Christ's blood says another has died for the crimes committed against God, and not just for one person, but for an untold multitude of people who will trust in the Son.

Christ's blood is better than Abel's. Such is the measure and the depth of our grace that has been bestowed upon us, and the lovingkindness of the Father to give us such grace.

Now here's the key, or a key: to presume upon that and to use His grace as an excuse to coddle our pet sins, to deny that we have a problem, to be apathetic or indifferent, or to indulge our sinful habits is a high-handed crime against an infinite grace. If we were to summarize verses 22–24, we would say that we have been brought to a great place, to the heavenly city, and therefore you and I should live as citizens of that heavenly city. Live and serve as citizens of that heavenly city, knowing that we are going to spend eternity there. We have been brought to a great people, an angelic host in festive assembly and the spirits of the righteous made perfect. And therefore we should live and serve as those who have a place among that great company of God's elect, His elect angels and His elect people. And we have been brought to a great privilege of the firstborn enrolled in Heaven. Therefore we should live and serve as those who have been given such a promised inheritance. And we have been brought to a great purchase; namely, we have been purchased by the blood of God's own Son. And therefore we should live and serve as those for whom Christ has shed His blood, the highest price that can be paid.

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