

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 7 November 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Christ's Last Will and Testament

Hebrews 9:16-24

In virtually every culture, a person who is about to die has some kind of legal option to make a “last will and testament.” Every society has some kind of arrangement for a person to leave an inheritance to his family, or to whomever he chooses, after he dies.

Well, guess what? Those of us who are saved have received an inheritance; and this inheritance was obtained for us by our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. What are the “provisions” of this inheritance?

Well, the first and foremost provision of our inheritance is **salvation**. “Forgiveness of sins,” “eternal life,” and “reconciliation with God” are just a few other names for it. To be saved is to be restored to a relationship with God, which you did not have before. Simply put, God Himself, and His Son, Jesus Christ, *are* the Christian’s inheritance! To have Jesus is to have Salvation.

Another important part of our inheritance is **the New Birth**. In this New Testament age in which we now live, the New Birth is directly linked with salvation. If you have been saved, you have also received the New Birth. However, the New Birth *specifically* means the *indwelling of the Holy Spirit* in our bodies. The moment a sinner believes on Jesus, not only does he receive the forgiveness of sins, but the Holy Spirit moves into that person’s life. The Holy Spirit gives saved people a new nature, and a new desire to serve God. The Holy Spirit enlightens our minds so that we can understand God’s Word. He gives us power to live righteously. He comforts our hearts. He assists us in praying when we don’t even know how to pray. And, He seals us until the Resurrection Day.

Another privilege of our inheritance is that of **being a priest unto God** in the Temple of our bodies, and in the Temple of the local church (after we follow the Lord in baptism). As priests, we have direct access to God through the way that Christ has opened to us. Day and night, we can offer to God the spiritual offerings of thanksgiving, praise, sacrificial giving, and whole-hearted submission to God!

Another provision of our inheritance is that of **ruling and reigning with Christ** in His Kingdom. Not only are we “priests unto God”; we are “*kings* unto God.” For 1,000 glorious years, we will “***reign on the earth.***”

Last, but certainly not least, our inheritance also includes the provision of spending eternity with God in **the New Jerusalem**, and of **receiving eternal rewards** for our service to God in this life.

Yet, what was necessary for us to *receive* this inheritance? The death of the testator! An earthly inheritance can’t be left to someone until the one who made the “last will and testament” dies. In the same way, our elder Brother, Jesus Christ, had to **die** in order to give us the inheritance that He provided for us! This morning, we will look at some of the implications of this truth. The title of this message is ***Christ's Last Will and Testament.***

Read Hebrews 9:16-17.

This morning we will examine two of the terms that were necessary for Christ's "last will and testament" to take effect. These two terms are: **Christ's death**, and **Christ's blood**.

I. Term # 1: Christ's death (vv. 16-17)

It is important to remember that Paul was writing to a Jewish audience that *professed* to believe on Jesus Christ. Now, probably most of the people in his audience were true Christians who simply needed encouragement, strengthening, and spiritual grounding. However, Paul also knew that some in his audience were *not* truly saved, even though they professed to be. The fact that some of them were seriously thinking about abandoning their profession of Christ in order to avoid persecution was a "red flag" to Paul. He knew that there were some who had never truly been saved.

These professing, yet unsaved people had, for a time, *claimed* to embrace the cross of Christ; but deep in their minds, they were *ashamed* of the cross, and did not really value it. If they had really been trusting in the Christ of Calvary, they would not have been willing to abandon Him, and go back to the empty shell of Judaism.

The cross of Christ is always offensive to those who have not truly come to Christ. The fact that Christ died for our sins, as *our Substitute*, because we could not save ourselves, is incomprehensible to those who have not received the gift of salvation. Let's see what Paul said about the cross.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Claiming to be a Christian is not enough. Knowing every word of "The Old Rugged Cross" by heart is not enough. If you consider yourself to be saved because you have lived a moral life, then you are rejecting the terms for receiving the "inheritance" of salvation. God's terms for our salvation is the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. **This means that in order for you to receive the inheritance of salvation, you must receive these terms.** By simple faith, you must accept Jesus' death in your place as the *only* way that you can be saved. If you try to add your *own* goodness and righteousness to your salvation, you are rejecting the provision that God has made for you.

Think about the way that things work with earthly inheritances. Suppose that you are the sole inheritor of your dad's estate. Your name is written into the "last will and testament," and it is signed and sealed by several notaries. There is no question that your dad wants to leave his inheritance to you after he dies. Yet, suppose that your dad has not died yet. He is still living. Yet, you can't wait for his death. You want the inheritance *now*, and in *your* way. And so, you try to hack into your dad's bank account and steal his life's savings. Would that be O.K.? After all, your dad intended for you to receive his inheritance. Wouldn't that make it legitimate? Obviously not. You would be accounted a thief; and not only would you forfeit the inheritance, but you would go to prison.

So it is with salvation. If you try to get to Heaven without “accepting the terms” in Christ’s “last will and testament,” then you are forfeiting the inheritance that Christ has prepared for you. Also, you are facing the prospect of eternity in the fiery prison that God has prepared for the devil and his angels. There is only *one way* to receive the inheritance of salvation: you must embrace the death of Christ in your place as your *only* hope.

Christ has written His “last will and testament”: and this testament has a name. It is called **the New Testament**. In the New Testament (or, New Covenant), the provision for receiving the inheritance of salvation is that you place your complete trust in the Son. There is no other way. Anyone who tries to get in by any other means is “*a thief and a robber.*”

Read John 10:1-2, 9-18.

Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. The *only way* we can enter into the “Door” of salvation is to go through the One who laid down His life for us. You cannot separate the “inheritance” of salvation from the death of Christ. His death was that which *purchased* our salvation!

This means that there are only two kinds of people in this world—those who receive God’s terms of salvation, and those who reject it. Tragically, many people don’t even *realise* that they are rejecting God’s terms of salvation, because the Gospel has never been presented to them. Others have heard God’s terms of salvation, yet reject them. Still others *have heard* the terms, and *claim* to have received them; but they haven’t really received them, because they still think that they will get to Heaven because they are “basically good people.” Yet, all three of these types of people are rejecting God’s terms of salvation, and are on their way to hell.

God’s terms of salvation have always been hated by the world. Take a look at how the world reacted to Christ’s announcement of these terms of inheritance.

Read John 10:19-21.

Everywhere Jesus went, large crowds gathered around Him to watch Him do amazing miracles. Yet, Jesus always “dropped a bomb” on the idle thrill-seekers by saying things like this. Almost without exception, the crowds were divided. Christ gave them no choice but to receive His words, or to reject them. Most rejected them, and counted them as madness; and so it still is to this day. The world is still divided over Jesus’ words. Most people still reject Christ’s message that *He alone* is the Way of salvation. To most of the world, the idea that their own goodness isn’t good enough, and that they must place their trust in Christ’s death in order to be saved, is preposterous! However, to those who are saved, these terms of salvation are precious. They are the means by which we have received our “inheritance.”

Brethren, we need to realise that we are *not* going to be loved by the world! If you proclaim the true Gospel to people, you will be shunned. If you live the way a Christian should live, most people will avoid you. You will be like oil in water. “But I’m not willing to pay that price,” many professing Christians say. If that be the case, I can’t help but question their salvation. My Bible tells me that a true disciple of Jesus Christ counts the cost of following Jesus, and decides that Jesus is more precious to him than even friends and family.

Read Matthew 10:32-39.

Christian, there may come a time, in the not-distant future, when proclaiming God's terms of salvation will cost you dearly! Mainstream culture is already portraying Bible-believing Christians as fanatical relics of the Dark Ages, who stand in the way of "world peace"; and as the Tribulation draws nearer, those who insist that Jesus is the only Way will increasingly be branded as "haters," and as dangers to society. We can expect, as the Day of the LORD approaches, that "*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.*"

Are you ready for that reality, Christian? Are you grounded in the truth that we're talking about this morning? Are you resolved that "No matter what happens, I will *not* deny Jesus' name"? Will you stand unmoved upon the truth that "Jesus died for me: and because He died for me, I will serve Him in life and in death"?

II. Requirement # 2: Christ's blood (vv. 18-22)

(Read verses 18-22.) In order for us to receive the inheritance, we must accept the terms of Christ's death. However, there is another term that is necessary for Christ's "will and testament" to be effective. Not only was it necessary for Christ to die, **but it was necessary for His blood to be shed.**

From the beginning of the world, God made it clear that the shedding of blood would be necessary in order for man to be saved. In every ancient civilisation, covenants were usually sealed with the blood of some kind of animal. Where did this idea come from? Did it just come out of thin air? No. It came from the example of God Himself, when He shed the blood of an animal in order to make coats of skins for Adam and Eve, and taught Adam and Eve to perform regular sacrifices of lambs on an altar.

Read Genesis 3:21 and 4:1-5.

After the Flood, Noah and his family performed sacrifices of animals to show their faith in God's promise that a Saviour was coming to pay for our sins. Sadly, Noah's descendants soon perverted this truth into pagan, occultic myths, as people turned farther and farther away from God. Yet, the presence of *blood sacrifices* in religions throughout the world shows that at one time, Adam and His children understood that "***without shedding of blood is no remission.***"

God showed man, all the way back in the Garden of Eden, that the most precious kind of blood would have to be shed in order for man to be reconciled to God. The Old Covenant was filled with symbols and pictures of salvation; but of all the rituals that were done under the Old Covenant, the shedding of blood was the most prominent.

With this in mind, let's read **verses 18-22** again. **(Read verses 18-22.)** In these verses, we see that **in the Old Covenant, blood was absolutely necessary.** God's Covenant with Israel not only was full of blood, but it was *inaugurated* with the shedding of blood! Before the Tabernacle began its operation, all the articles of the Tabernacle, and the people of Israel themselves, were sprinkled with the blood of calves and goats! Let's go back to **Exodus**, and read about this momentous event.

Read Exodus 24:6-8.

Without the shedding of blood, there would have been no Old Covenant. The Old Covenant *began* with the shedding of blood, and *continued* with shedding of blood. The shedding of blood was profuse, and never-ending. What, then, are we to make of all that blood? The Old Testament Scriptures repeatedly state that the ***“life of the flesh is in the blood.”*** The Old Testament Scriptures also state that the blood of lambs, bulls, goats, and doves had to be shed in order to ***“make atonement”*** for sins. Even the *furniture* in the Temple (the altar of sacrifice, the laver, the table of showbread, the Menorah, the altar of incense, and the Ark) had to be cleansed with blood, because they were touched by the hands of sinful men!

Now, this forces us to one of two conclusions. Either the blood of bulls and goats really atones for our sins, and is necessary to make us right with God: or, the blood of bulls and goats was only a *symbol* of the blood of Christ, which actually washes away sins.

If the first of these two conclusions be true (if the blood of animals be needed to take away sins), then we are all in big trouble, because there has been no Temple, and no sacrificial system, for nearly 1,900 years! The blood of bulls and goats has not been shed for almost two millennia. How, then, can we be saved?

Well, thank God, we *can* be saved, because the blood of bulls and goats was only symbolic. It never took away sins. It is the perfect, sinless, blood of the Son of God that takes away our sins, forever!

This brings us to **verses 23-24. (Hebrews 9:23-24 again.)** As we read these verses, did you notice the similarity between Moses’ words and Jesus’ words? When Moses initiated the Old Covenant, he said, ***“This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you” (v. 20).*** Now, fast-forward 1,400 years, to the night of the Last Supper. When Jesus was preparing to initiate the New Covenant with the shedding of *His* blood, He said very similar words. He said, ***“Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28).***

Think of that contrast between the two covenants! Both the Old and the New Testament were ratified with blood. The first Covenant offered *animal* blood for the *symbolic* remission of sins; but the New Covenant offers the sacrifice of *Jesus’* precious blood, which brings *real* forgiveness of sin!

Think also about the contrast between the two Tabernacles. **(Read Hebrews 9:23 again.)** As we’ve studied through **Hebrews**, we’ve seen that there is a real Temple in Heaven. In fact, the *earthly* Temple was patterned after the heavenly one. We also know that the earthly Temple had to be purified with the blood of bulls and goats. Yet, according to this verse, the *heavenly* Temple had to be purified with blood, as well! Paul says that the heavenly Temple was purified with ***“better sacrifices than these.”*** We know that these ***“better sacrifices”*** refers to Jesus’ sacrifice; yet, why would the Temple in Heaven need to be “purified” with Jesus’ blood? Does this imply that there is *sin* in Heaven? Isn’t Heaven a perfect place? It certainly is!

Yet, we must remember what Paul said in **Ephesians 2**. Paul said that in God's sight, we who are saved are *already* seated in heavenly places. The "veil" between us and God has been removed. Every time we, as Spirit-indwelt believers, go to God in prayer, it is as though we are in the very throne room of God--because we are always in His presence. Yet, we are still sinners. If we, then, as sinners, are to have this access to God's holy presence in the heavenly Temple, the *heavenly Temple itself* must be purified, because of the presence of our sin. And how is the heavenly Temple purified? By the precious blood of Jesus!

You cannot get around the death of our Testator, Jesus Christ: and you cannot get around the blood of Jesus Christ! There simply is no other way for sin's awful price to be paid. Christ had to make the perfect sacrifice for us. By the way, did you notice what Paul said about Christ's sacrifice in **verse 23**? He said that the things in the heavenly Temple were purified "***with better sacrifices than these.***" Paul referred to Christ's sacrifice in the *plural* ("***sacrifices***"). Why did he do this? Hasn't Paul repeatedly said that Jesus made only *one* sacrifice for sins? Yes, he has. However, you need to remember that Paul was a Jew; and as a Jew, he tended to say things in the way that a Hebrew-speaker would say them. In Hebrew, singular nouns are often made plural, in order to indicate *intensity*. Let's look at an example from **Isaiah 53**.

Read Isaiah 53:9.

To any child of God, the prophecy in this verse is crystal clear. This is a prophecy of how Christ, the sinless Son of God, would die alongside criminals (the thieves who were crucified on his right hand and left hand). It is also a prophecy of how He would be buried in the tomb of a *rich* man--Joseph of Arimathea. Yet, there is a little detail in this verse that you cannot see until you look at the original Hebrew language. In this verse, the Hebrew word for "***death***" is *mothayw*; and *mothayw* is **plural**. The translators of our Bible translated this word as "***death,***" since the word "deaths" doesn't make grammatical sense in our language; yet, there is a reason why God inspired Isaiah to write the word "deaths." The word "deaths" shows the *intensity* of Jesus' death. As Jesus hung on the cross, separated from His Father, it was as though He were dying *billions* of deaths, to pay the ransom for *billions* of souls!

Are you getting the idea now? Do you see why Paul says that the heavenly Temple had to be purified with "***better sacrifices***"? Jesus made only one sacrifice on the cross; yet, it was as though He were making *billions* of sacrifices, to atone for the sins of *billions* of souls!

Now, the world doesn't like this message. They don't like to hear that the *death* of Christ was necessary in order to save us; and they don't like to hear that the *blood* of Christ was necessary to save us. The world didn't like this message when *Jesus* was on earth; and they still don't like it today.

Read John 6:53, 57-66.

Christian, don't be surprised when the world disdains you for speaking of the blood of Jesus! The world will listen to any number of outrageous lies. People will listen, for example, to a spirit who speaks through a psychic "channeler"; and they'll believe that spirit when he tells

them that he is a highly evolved, 35,000-year-old being from Jupiter. They'll soak up this "Jupiterian's" words as he says things such as, "We are all god. *You* are a god. *Nature* is god. There is no good or evil, because there is no good or evil in god. And above all, there is no death, or judgment. You are your own saviour." More and more, the world is accepting such lies. Is it any wonder, then, that when Christians speak of sin, death, and judgment, they are hated and vilified? The world doesn't want to hear that they are sinners, or that they will be judged by a holy God, or that they need to humble themselves before Him, and receive *His* way of salvation! Above all, they don't want to hear about Jesus' blood.

What are we to do, then? Do we keep silent about the blood of Jesus? God forbid! As God's people, must stand up and proclaim that there *is* sin; that death *is* real; that judgment *is* coming; and that the only way we can stand in the judgment is to have our sins washed away by the precious blood of the Lamb! The English preacher Charles Spurgeon once wrote:

"There is a strange power about the very name of blood; and the sight of it is always affecting. A kind heart cannot bear to see a sparrow bleed; and unless familiarised by use, turns away with horror at the slaughter of a beast. As to the blood of men, it is a consecrated thing; it is murder to shed it....Is this solemnity occasioned by the fact that the blood is the *life*, and the pouring of it forth the token of *death*? We think so. When we rise to contemplate the blood of the Son of God, our awe is yet more increased, and **we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin**, and the terrible penalty which the sin-bearer endured."

Spurgeon hit the nail right on the head when he said, "we shudder as we think of the guilt of sin." That is *precisely* why the world hates the blood of Jesus! The blood of Jesus reminds us of what our salvation cost God; and it arouses a sense of guilt in the sinner. Yet, to those of us who are saved, the mention of Christ's blood not only reminds us of our *guilt*; it also reminds us of our *means of forgiveness*. We *rejoice* at the thought of the shed blood of Jesus, because we know that our sins are forgiven because of it. Not only that, but we rejoice to think that our Redeemer is risen, and is alive forever more! **(Read Hebrews 9:24 again.)**

If Jesus had died for our sins, yet had not risen again, we would have no hope of salvation. As Paul said, we would be "***of all men most miserable.***" If Christ had died, and His body had turned to dust forever--and if He had "arisen" merely in spirit, as the Jehovah's Witnesses claim--then we would have no hope of salvation. Our salvation rests upon not only the **death of Jesus Christ**, but also upon **His bodily resurrection!** Why? Because He, as our living Lord, is able to be the sinless Representative of man. Because Jesus is still a real, flesh-and-blood Man, He is qualified to be the Mediator between God and Man! Thank God that our Redeemer lives, and that He is in the presence of God at this very moment, interceding for us!

Conclusion: In one of Charles Wesley famous hymns, he described Jesus' high priestly role in this way: "*The Father hears Him pray, His dear anointed One; He cannot turn away the presence of His Son: His Spirit answers to the blood, His Spirit answer to the blood, and tells me I am born of God.*"

The death of Jesus, and the shedding of His blood, has provided us with salvation; and the offer extends to all. *Everyone's* name was written into the Testament. *Every soul in history* was named as a legatee. God wants *everyone* to be saved. However, the inheritance must be received upon *one* condition—that we accept His death, and His blood, as our only means of salvation. Have *you* done this? If not, please

don't put it off! Your eternity hangs in the balance! If you reject God's terms, and pass out of this life trusting in your own righteousness, you will forfeit the eternal life that Jesus purchased for you.

Should you be saved already, I urge you to think again about the price of your sin. It cost the Son of God the shedding of His blood to ransom your soul. Do you thank Him every day for doing that for you? Are you allowing Him to cleanse you of the daily sin that besets you? Or do you let day after day go by without confessing your sin? If so, now is the time to come to Him for cleansing and forgiveness.