

A MATTER OF MUSTS: NAMING THE NECESSARY (Hebrews 9:15-23)

Picture yourself strolling through a park. You come across a bench. Upon the bench is a note that reads: “Wet Paint: Do Not Touch.” Let me ask this: “What do you want to do?” You want to touch it. You might not touch it, but you want to, and that is the point. If you walked by the park bench and there was no sign on it, you would have no compulsion to touch it. There is something about the human heart that makes us want to do what we are told we must not do.

Paul recognized this. Listen to what he wrote in Romans 7, “I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness” (vv. 7-8).

Generally, most people don’t like it when they are told by an authority figure, “You must do this” or “You must not do that.” I know some people who resent it that the law says, “You must wear a seat-belt while driving.” They may think it is a good idea, but they don’t want to be told they have to.

Not just a few are resentful when a non-elected bureaucrat tells us what we can and cannot do on our own property.

There is a little four-letter word that appears 236 times in the Bible. Its first appearance is in Genesis 4. In Genesis 4:7 we read, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

That small word *must* shows up 111 times in the OT and 125 times in the NT. Its first occurrence in the NT is in Matthew 5:48 where we read, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The final time we find the word *must* is in Revelation 22:9 where John falls down before an angel to worship, and the angel says to him, “You must not do that.”

In the Bible we find numerous things that we must do and those things that we must not do.

The truth of the matter is that we can do whatever we choose to do. God is not going to make us obey Him. He is not going to force us to follow His will. We can do what we want to do. There is one thing we can’t do, however. We can’t choose the consequences of our choices and of our actions. The Bible affirms that we will reap what we sow. We will harvest what we plant.

Paul declares, “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:8).

King Solomon advises, “Rejoice, O young man in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes.” Then he adds this warning, “But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment” (Ecclesiastes 11:9). In other words, the wise King says, “Feel free to do whatever you want to do, just remember that God is watching, and He has the last word.” For that reason, we should really do what God wants.

There is another word that is a close cousin in meaning to the word *must*. It shows up only 13 times and only in the NT. Luke used it the most times. He used it five times in his two books. It is the word *necessary*. There are simply some things that are necessary, things that either have to happen or things we have to do. There is just no way around it.

One time that Luke used *necessary* was when he quoted Jesus. Do you remember that on the day that Jesus arose He was walking down a road with two of His followers, and those two followers didn't recognize Jesus? Jesus taught Sunday School that day to a class of two. He asked them a question. He asked, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24:26).

Later on, Luke used the word again when he reported what Paul did when he came to Thessalonica. We read in Acts 17:2-3, "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.'"

Those two words *must* and *necessary* both show up in today's text—Hebrews 9:15-23. That being the case, the title for today's message is, "A Matter of Musts: Naming the Necessary." We are going to look at three things that fit the category of being a must; all three things are necessary. We will see why that is the case.

You will remember that in Hebrews 9 the author of this letter contrasts the first covenant with the second covenant. He shows why the covenant based on grace is superior to the covenant based on the Law, why Jesus is a better High Priest and why His sacrifice is better than the sacrifice of bulls and goats.

Let's read our text. We are going to look at three musts.

There Is a Legal Must: Notice What Is Necessary for a Will to Take Effect

The words *covenant* and *testament* mean essentially the same thing. Our Bible is composed of an Old Testament and a New Testament which is the same as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

We employ the word *testament* when we talk about our last will and testament. There are three important terms to know when discussing a will: *a testator*, *an executor*, and *a beneficiary*. What do each of those terms mean? A testator is the one who expresses what he or she wants done with his estate and possessions. The executor is the one who makes sure that the will is carried out in accordance with the wishes of the deceased. Of course, the beneficiary is the person or persons who receive what has been willed to them.

Who is the testator of the New Covenant? Who is the executor? And who are the beneficiaries? Look again at v.15. This is the first and only time in history when the testator and the executor were the same person. The one who made the will is the same one who makes sure it is carried out. How is that possible? It is possible because Jesus didn't stay dead.

Before a will can take effect, it must be proven that the testator has in fact died.

Many movies have been made and there are real-life examples of relatives who planned or participated in the murder of a family member in order to get a life insurance policy or to hasten the receipt of the estate. They don't want to have to wait until the person dies a natural death.

One of the most famous wills ever was that of a certain Canadian lawyer named Charles Millar. He was known as a prankster and a jokester. His sense of humor showed up in his will. There were several interesting bequests that he made.

He gave three men whom he knew each hated one another joint tenancy of his vacation home in Jamaica.

He stipulated that seven prominent Toronto Protestant ministers and temperance advocates were to receive \$700,000 worth of O'Keefe Brewery stock, a Catholic business, if they participated in its management and drew on its dividends.

He left instructions that three staunch, anti-horse-racing advocates were to receive \$25,000 worth of Ontario Jockey Club stock.

But his most famous bequest and the one that received the most attention was the one that required that the balance of his estate was to be converted to cash ten years after his death and given to the Toronto woman who gave birth to the most children in that time. In the event of a tie, the bequest would be divided equally. The resulting contest became known as the Great Stork Derby. It was determined that four women each had nine babies in the ten years that followed Millar's death, and those four women each received an equal share of his estate.

It was ironic that Millar, who never had children, was the cause of an untold number of births in the city of Toronto.

All of Millar's bequests hinged on one thing—his death.

In the same way, the glorious aspects of the New Covenant were all dependent on one thing, the death of Jesus. Jesus' death wasn't an afterthought or God's Plan B. The NIV refers to Jesus in Revelation 13:8 as "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." Before God put this blue ball spinning in space, He had determined that His Son would die on behalf of those who would one day inhabit this planet.

The NT teaches that God had a work for His Son to perform, and as Jesus was dying on that cross He said triumphantly, "It is finished." Among other things, Jesus was saying, "I have completed the task God gave Me to do."

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter boldly proclaimed that Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

While an inheritance requires the death of the testator there is something peculiar about our inheritance which is mentioned in v. 15 of our text. Look with me at 1 Peter 1:3-5, and as we read this passage ask yourself, "When do we receive this promised inheritance?"

We receive it upon our death. In order for you to get all that Jesus has willed to you, you must die. There are many, truly wonderful things we receive here, but the best is yet to come.

One of my favorite preachers is a sociology professor and author named Tony Campolo. Years ago, he preached a sermon he entitled, "The Year of Jubilee." Here is an excerpt:

I went to my first black funeral when I was 16 years old. A friend of mine, Clarence, had died. The pastor was incredible. From the pulpit he talked about the Resurrection in beautiful terms. He had us thrilled. He came down from the pulpit, went to the family, and comforted them from the fourteenth chapter of John. "Let

not your heart be troubled,” he said, ““You believe in God, believe also in me,’ said Jesus. Clarence has gone to heavenly mansions.”

Then, for the last 20 minutes of the sermon, he actually preached to the open casket. Now, that's drama! He yelled at the corpse: “Clarence! Clarence!” He said it with such authority. I would not have been surprised had there been an answer. He said, “Clarence, there were a lot of things we should have said to you that we never said to you. You got away too fast, Clarence. You got away too fast.” He went down this litany of beautiful things that Clarence had done for people. When he finished—here's the dramatic part—he said, “That's it, Clarence. There's nothing more to say. When there's nothing more to say, there's only one thing to say. Good night. Good night, Clarence!” He grabbed the lid of the casket and slammed it shut. “Good night, Clarence!” *Boom!*

Shock waves went over the congregation. As the preacher then lifted his head, you could see there was this smile on his face. He said, “Good night, Clarence. Good night, Clarence, because I know, I know that God is going to give you a good morning!” The choir stood and starting singing, “On that great morning, we shall rise, we shall rise.” We were dancing in the aisles and hugging each other. I knew the joy of the Lord, a joy that in the face of death laughs and sings and dances, for there is no sting to death.

We have looked at a legal must. Now consider . . .

There Is a Redemptive Must: Notice What Is Necessary for Sin to Be Forgiven

Look again at vv. 18-22. As we consider v. 18, we have to go to Exodus 24:8 to see how blood was central to the inauguration of the first covenant.

In Matthew 26:27-28 we see the inauguration of the second covenant. Look at what Jesus says.

Let me take you back to New Year's Eve 1961. The First Baptist Church of Dallas, TX held a service. It started at 7:00 PM and ended at 12:00 AM, midnight. The service consisted almost entirely of Pastor W.A. Criswell preaching one of his most famous sermons that he later turned into a book. The title of the sermon was, “The Scarlet Thread.” He said there is a scarlet thread that is woven throughout the text of Scripture. In his sermon he traced that thread throughout every book of the Bible. It is the story of redemption.

Many, many years later, David Dykes the present pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, TX preached his own sermon which he entitled, “The Scarlet Thread.” In his more modest, 30-minute sermon, he looks at five sacrifices and the first four point toward the fifth—Jesus' death on the cross.

The first event involves the story of Adam and Eve sinning against God by doing what He expressly told them not to do. They became aware of their nakedness, and they tried to hide their shame by fashioning clothes made of fig leaves. What did God do? He covered them with clothes made from an animal. What happened to the animal? It died. Its blood was shed to cover their shame.

He then goes to the story of Abel and his brother Cain. They both brought an offering. Whose offering was accepted? It was Abel's offering. And what was that offering? He offered an animal sacrifice.

Next, Pastor Dykes recounts the story of Abraham and his son going up to Mount Moriah to offer a sacrifice. In the end, God provides a ram as the sacrifice. The ram is a substitute.

Next, he tells the story of Passover. The blood of the lamb shields the people from God's judgment.

Then, Pastor Dykes speaks of the sacrifices that were made in the temple and how the blood of those animals was meant to atone for the sin of the people. All of those events led toward the ultimate and final sacrifice. It was the sacrifice of the one John the Baptist called "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Dykes told about a recent trip to China where he met with leaders of the underground church. He said that God is doing amazing things in China. He said that it is estimated that 20 to 25,000 people are coming to Christ every day in China.

Listen to the words of Dr. Dykes. Concerning the leaders of the underground church, he said:

These are extremely educated and successful men who came from the fields of business, law, and medicine. I asked one of them about the most effective evangelism strategy he uses to lead Chinese people to Christ. I was surprised when he answered, "I just use the Chinese alphabet." The Chinese alphabet doesn't use letters. Instead, their characters are pictures; each word is made by combining different pictures. Chinese people are amazed to learn that many Chinese words are built with pictures that coincide with the stories in the Bible. For instance, the Chinese character for "flood" pictures eight people in an ark, exactly as described in the story of Noah in Genesis.

Of all the Chinese characters that have a Biblical connection, the most powerful is the word which we translate as "righteousness." In Chinese, it basically means "a lamb for me." This is truly amazing when you realize that the Chinese language dates back to 3000 B.C.—centuries before the Bible was written! When this pastor shares that the Bible identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," almost 100% of the Chinese turn to Jesus on the spot!

We have looked at a legal must and a redemptive must. Finally, we discover . . .

There Is a Theological Must: Notice What Is Necessary for God to Be Satisfied

Look at v. 23. Concerning this verse, John MacArthur wrote, "All the blood of the Old Covenant was just a copy, a faint picture, of the shed blood of Jesus."

It was through His death that Jesus satisfied the wrath of God. As a holy and just God, God has to punish sin. Sin is repugnant to God. He can't just sweep it under a rug. He can't just ignore it. His character requires that He punish sinners because of their sin.

Jesus, however, chose to take our place and take our punishment. He is our substitute. He endured God's wrath against sin on our behalf.

MacArthur went on to write:

The idea that God accepts us as we are is utterly unbiblical. We come to Jesus just as we are, since there is nothing worthwhile we can bring. But He does not present us to the Father just as we are. We are totally unpresentable as we are . . . When Jesus presents us to His Father, He presents us in Himself, as He is. When we enter into God's presence, God sees Jesus instead of us. He sees Jesus' righteousness instead of our unrighteousness. He sees Jesus' sacrifice instead of our sin, His payment for our sin instead of the penalty we deserve for our sin. Jesus recognized the indebtedness of sinners. He recognized that God had to be satisfied, and He offered His own blood—His own self—on our behalf.

Many unbelievers think they need to clean themselves up before they come to God. They think they need to overcome this habit first or experience some kind of moral victory before they can come to God. They are correct in the sense that they do need to be cleaned up, but they are incorrect in regard to who is the One to do the cleaning. We are unable to clean ourselves up sufficiently to meet God's standards. We need Someone Else to clean us up, and that Someone is Jesus.

We come to Jesus as we are. He cleanses us and presents us to His Father. His Father receives us because we have been thoroughly washed by Jesus.

One Easter morning, the great pastor, Dr. A. J. Gordon, surprised his Boston congregation when he set an old rusty birdcage on the pulpit. It was empty and the door was open. He told the congregation a story about meeting a dirty-faced, little boy from the slums who had filled the birdcage with frightened sparrows he had trapped. Dr. Gordon asked him what he was going to do with the birds. The kid scowled and said, "Oh, I just like poking them with this stick, and watching them flutter around. When I'm finished playing with them, I suppose I'll kill 'em."

Dr. Gordon asked, "Would you sell me those birds?" The boy said, "Mister, you don't want these birds; they ain't worth nothin'. They're just old field sparrows."

Dr. Gordon said, "I'll give you \$5 for them and the cage."

The kid's eyes lit up as he said, "Five whole dollars? Sure!"

The boy walked off laughing at his new riches. Dr. Gordon then walked into a park and opened the door of the cage. At first the sparrows huddled in the cage, but as he gently tapped the bottom of the cage, each one flew to the door and then spread their wings to fly away to freedom. They chirped as they flew away and Dr. Gordon said as the birds circled in the sky, it was as if they were singing, "Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!"

That's our story as well. We have been redeemed by Jesus. Instead of being worthless, we are of incredible worth to the Father. Jesus has opened your prison door. Come out and embrace Him as your Savior and Lord.