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Introduction

The writer to the Hebrews tends to overwhelm the reader; at least, that is the case for me. His use of argument is complex, his ideas are rich, and his explanations have repetition with expansion. Accordingly, in our text (9.15), he draws a conclusion that he drew already; namely, that Jesus is **the mediator of a new covenant**, but this is the first time he draws it out so plainly. For example, earlier, he summarized his point that **we have such a high priest** (8.1) noting in a subordinate clause that the covenant He mediates is better than the old covenant (8.6), and we have to discover what that covenant is from his quotation of Jeremiah 31; it is the new covenant. To follow him, we have to peel the onion and work through rich layers of thought, one layer on top of another. Now in 9.15, he puts a summary argument on top of the “a fortiori” argument (the much more argument) of 9.13-14. The argument (of vs. 13-14) goes like this: if there was purification in an external way by the blood of bulls and goats, how much more is there purification that reaches the heart by the blood of Christ. By His death as a sacrifice, Jesus purifies the conscience from dead works for living works because He gives life to fallen sinners who are both dead in sin and defiled by sin. Therefore, he concludes, “Jesus is **the mediator of a new covenant**” (9.15).

That seems plain enough. Jesus achieved what the old priesthood could not achieve. The sacrifices of the old covenant had no saving power, but the sacrifice of our Lord has saving power to purify the conscience. Therefore, He does not continue the priestly mediation of the old covenant. Instead, He is mediator of a new covenant (as He said of the communion cup: **this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood**).

Therefore, the topic here is the mediation of Christ. We should note, however, that this text does not conclude that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant; that is, it does not state that and that alone. To be more accurate, the conclusion is that He is the mediator of a new covenant with a purpose for those whom He calls: **Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance** (9.15a). Thus, the passage answers the question: “for whom does Jesus mediate the new covenant and the better purification that extends beyond externals of the body to internals of the conscience? He does His mediatorial work for those He calls. This tells us something about how the dead in sin come to have life in Christ.

Our title for today is therefore “Mediation for those He calls.” We will cover two things to develop this message: 1) an explanation of calling, and 2) implications of this mediation.

1A. An explanation of calling

To explain this doctrine, we need to survey the Bible for background and then reflect on calling in our text.

1B. God’s call in Scripture

Such a survey will give us some of the flavor of this biblical bread for the soul. Truly, we will taste and see that the Lord is good.

1) God’s call opens up a conversation (this is the core of calling)

It involves calling out to someone by name, but it is often more than simply saying their name. When you call someone, you call them to something. A phone call is for a phone conversation. The Lord called out to Adam in the garden (Gen 3:9) and to Moses from the bush (Ex. 3:4) to get their attention, to converse with them, and to engage in personal conversation. So it was with Adam and Eve after their sin, sense of guilt, and hiding from the Lord: **⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden...the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, [then God said]...¹² The man said ...¹³ Then the LORD God said** (Gen. 3.8-13).

To call someone is to make yourself known to him and by that call to establish a line of communication. If I am intent on speaking to you but you do not notice me, I will call out to you, call your name, get your attention, make myself known and thus open up a conversation.

2) God's call gives you a calling

In Ephesians 5:1, Paul combines three different uses of the term: **I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge [call] you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.** Paul calls out to you who read his letter, gets your attention, focuses your attention, and encourages appropriate action (that you walk worthy). He mentions God's call that gave you a calling. Your calling is your station in life, your vocation. Your activity in the world, in your everyday walk, is a calling that the Lord has assigned you. Therefore, your work, as everything else you do, has sanctity and dignity.

3) God's call is effectual

Regarding God's relation to sinners, calling has two outstanding uses: God's general and God's special call. His general call is an invitation that He extends to sinners, an offer of privilege that may be rejected. An example is the call to the wedding that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 22: **The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,³ and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come (2-3).** People refuse invitations all the time. In contrast, God's special call is much more than an invitation or offer. It is a creative word from God that brings us into conversation with the Lord Jesus: **God...called you into fellowship with His son Jesus Christ our Lord**" (1 Cor. 1.9). Peter says God **"called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"** (1 Pet. 2.9). This transition is from unbelief, blindness, ignorance, and darkness. It is a transition that God effects by His call. By His call, the dead live!

Here is a summary definition that reflects some of the variety in the term and its flavor: God's effectual call is His immediate and direct action *overcoming* our resistance and *bringing* us to faith and thus to the salvation that is received by faith. God's effectual call is His making Himself known to someone and by that establishing a line of communication. When God is intent on fellowshiping with someone who does not notice Him, He will call out to that person, get his or her attention, *make Himself known* and thus *establish* conversation and fellowship.

Try to imagine a king or president making himself known to you. You have never met him and one day you are walking along and President Bush calls out your name (he knows you but you do not know him). He gets your attention and introduces himself. That is what happens to us in our coming to faith in Christ. A great king that you did not know called out your name and made Himself known to you. By this action on His part, your life will never be the same again. The King, the Sovereign, has called you. What a warm and welcome doctrine. This is a warm and welcome experience!

Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q 31) gives this *definition of effectual calling*: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel."

This means that God gives *a call that is always obeyed*. It means that the one who is thus called will hear the word of Christ and follow Him (**my sheep hear my voice and follow me**). Our death in sin makes us like Lazarus dead in the tomb, but the call of Christ is life-giving. (WCF: "made willing by his grace," chap. X, sec. 1). Once you meet someone, you can never unmeet him. It is a historical event. Calling is an introduction, a meeting, a coming to know that establishes a life-long conversation with the living God. Accordingly, all who are called *will be* justified and glorified: ²⁸ **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.** ²⁹ **For those whom he foreknew [foreloved] he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.** ³⁰ **And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified** (Rom. 8.28-30). Those He calls are those for whom God works all things for their good!

2B. Calling in Hebrews 9.15

In Hebrews 9.15, we find the roots of His call in His death: (**since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant**). The writer notes that our Lord is mediator for those He calls. It is helpful to trace this back to the work of the high priest who entered the holy places with the names of the tribes of Israel on his heart: **So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD** (Ex. 28.29).

The high priest mediated for the people in a general way, but there was a particularization when the high priest had the names of the sons of Israel (the twelve tribes, 28.21) literally on his heart by wearing a piece of fabric on his breast that bore their names. They were to be on his heart. This leaps forward to the high priest of the better covenant. Jesus had us on His heart, each by name, when He offered Himself as our substitute on the cross. Accordingly, it is fitting that He would transition us from wrath to grace in history by a call that He extends to us by name; thus, He gives us a new name: that of Christian. Clearly, His call (His drawing) has its roots in His work on the cross (Jn. 12.32). Thus, we know that our Lord is mediator *for those He calls by name and to whom He savingly introduces Himself*.

Calling is the way you get someone's attention and make yourself known to him: you call out to him, you call him by name, and he hears your call and knows that it is you that calls out to him. Our Lord's effectual call has this warmth of personal introduction to it. It is an irresistible call, an efficacious call, but more, it is a personal and self-revealing call by which the Holy Spirit makes Christ known to us, so that we know Him. Thus, we come to know God and His Son and to have eternal life (Jn. 17.3) by that call. Calling is an application of the eternal redemption that Jesus secured by His death for His covenant children (Heb. 9.12; 2.13b-17).

2A. Implications of this mediation

There are three intertwined implications. From this mediation, we have a relationship to the Law, knowledge of God, and hope that is dynamic.

1) A relationship to the Law

The text speaks to a relationship that you have to the Law as a Christian. You have freedom with respect to the Law (**a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant**). What keeps this from any suggestion of lawlessness (antinomianism)? It does not mean that you are free from responsibility to the Law. The freedom spoken of here is freedom from the curse of the Law. It is freedom from the Law's condemning finger. To be released **from the transgressions** of the first covenant means that you have been set free from the punishment of your sins by the death of your mediator. His death involved the payment of a ransom price to free a slave. You were the slave and His sacrifice satisfied the wrath of God against you; His sacrifice was an execution of courtroom justice.

Therefore, freedom from the claims of the Law that demand your punishment frees your conscience (9.14) and lightens your step so that you can take up the Law for obedience without fear of judgment and with friendship with God. Paul says the same thing in Romans: **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit** (Rom. 8.1-4). This is a main reason for our study of the Ten Commandments. We study them knowing the perfection of God's standard and our imperfection before it. Nonetheless, we study the commandments in order to continually make improvements in our walk with the Lord. We study them freely and open-heartedly because our sins are under the blood, not under the curse of the Law. You are not free from the Law (as to your sanctification); you are free for the Law; you are free for growth and progress in holy living.

2) Knowledge of God (in Christ by the Spirit)

What does the entire notion of calling indicate for your walk with God in the freedom of the Law? One thing has to be the privilege of growing in the knowledge of God in Christ by the

Spirit. Learning the Law is not something impersonal. It is God's Law that you learn for obedience to Him as it gives you a fuller understanding of His wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, and righteousness. When you hear His command, you know Him by His word. The Law is part of God's self-revelation. So, what you have here is but one aspect of the conversation that God established with you when He called you, when He got your attention and made Himself known to you. This established a fellowship and friendship. This fellowship and friendship with the triune God advances day by day through meditation on His Law day and night.

Psalm 119:1-18 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! ² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, ³ who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways! ⁴ You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. ⁵ Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! ⁶ Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments. ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous rules. ⁸ I will keep your statutes; do not utterly forsake me! ⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. ¹⁰ With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! ¹¹ I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. ¹² Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes! ¹³ With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. ¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. ¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. ¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. ¹⁷ Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. ¹⁸ Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

Psalm 119:47-48 I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. ⁴⁸ I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.

Psalm 119:97-105 ⁹⁷ Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. [O how I love you, my Lord and God! You are my meditation all the day.]

3) Hope that is dynamic

Out in front of you lies "promised eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9.15b). The way God brought you from darkness to light (by the effectual power of His call) indicates how it is that God will lead you home to glory. Paul makes this same connection in 1 Corinthians 1: ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge- ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you- ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1.4-9).

In the context in Hebrews no doubt, you should form a picture Israel in the wilderness. They received the Law, promised obedience to it, and journeyed toward Canaan with the promise of entry into a blessed rest with God in His rest. Canaan was the promised land of their inheritance. However, they did not receive the promise of rest that looked ahead in anticipation of the promised eternal inheritance. That inheritance has been in front of man since the creation of the world (Gen. 1; Heb. 4), but the old Israel was a stiff necked and hard-hearted people. Therefore, God swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest.

In marvelous contrast, the mediator of the new covenant will see to it that the new Israel arrives safely to the heavenly Canaan. Now, to insure that you, the new Israel, receive the promised eternal inheritance, Jesus secured your eternal redemption on the cross, insuring your deliverance from the law (from its condemnation) and your entry into the glory of heaven. You have a hope that is rock sure. Thus, whatever you face in life, you can look forward to what the song calls, "the day without a cloud" with hope that is expectation and anticipation. The more you taste of the Lord and see how good He is now along the way, the more you expect and anticipate what is yet to come for you in your entry into the presence of God in glory.

May we fall down before the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new and better covenant; may the Holy Spirit enable us to make great progress in our knowledge of God by His Law and with hope founded on tasting the goodness of the Lord. To the triune God be all glory now and forevermore, amen.