

Bad News and Good News for Modern Man: *The Consequences of (and Solutions for) Human Defilement*

Have you ever heard someone say, "There's good news and bad news"? Some people then go on to ask, "Do you want the good news or the bad news first?" Well, this is about the "real news". It consists of good news and bad news, but most of this is about the bad news. The premise of the gospel message is essentially that: 1) There was (and is) *real* news or what we know as *Truth*. 2) First it was good news; 3) Then it became bad news; 4) Now there's *really* good news (available) because God loves to replace bad news with good news. But many reject it.

But first the (real) good news: Almighty God, who reigns supreme from all eternity, created the heavens and earth and everything in it. All things are under His authority. Both Muslims and Christians agree on this. Further, since He is good, His created order was also good. Genesis 1 tells us that. On three occasions during the six days of creation the Creator looked upon all that He had made and declared that it was "good...very good". So we may surmise that living things, including humans, had all things necessary to flourish and have a "good" life; they enjoyed His favor and blessing in that paradise, Eden. But something went wrong. We shall not go into that story now because Muslims know it well. (But we shall refer to it again soon.)

Let's skip forward 4000 years or so to the time of Jesus (however many years that you believe it was between creation and Jesus, it doesn't matter). Now let's refer again to a teaching of Jesus on the subject of *defilement*. Both Christianity and Islam (and perhaps all religions) give attention to the notion of defilement. Why? I suggest that it's because it's common to human experience. Defilement is never neutral; it's always bad to be defiled (inherently), *i.e.* God does not want us to be defiled. Rather, He wants us to avoid things that defile us because they damage our status with Him. To *foolishly* (though *unwittingly*) do things that defile us is regrettable though common, and to *intentionally* do things that defile ourselves is especially bad. A simple computer search on the word *defile* in the Hebrew (OT) scriptures produced 101 references in one form or another. Here's one:

Numbers 19:13

"Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him. ...If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. Because the water for impurity has not been thrown on him, he is unclean."

Let's not talk about touching dead people. The most important things to observe are aside from the cause: *People become defiled* and Almighty God takes this very seriously. Whenever there is defilement something must be done about it; and since defilement is inherently offensive to God, only that which God prescribes will suffice. Admittedly, some people *seem* good (*i.e.* virtuous) and seem only to *occasionally* defile themselves (as it would appear to outside observers); but others seem to live in a state of perpetual defilement, as though they can't resist. Indeed, many people (religious and non-religious alike) live their lives in such a way as to show that they

could care less about being defiled in God's eyes; they actually *relish* in defiling themselves. This is one way we could describe all of humanity collectively. But whatever the case, there is always something that God requires to become *undefiled*, or spiritually clean. So once a person becomes defiled he/she has to address it. It doesn't just wear off or go away. In the Hebrew Scriptures, defilement is generally synonymous with sin, uncleanness and wickedness. Those who were defiled in any way were unclean and barred from entering into the temple. For more serious cases they were even forced outside the community. Asking forgiveness wasn't enough. In the Christian faith, the Almighty God is holy and does not allow defiled (i.e. unclean) people into his presence. See Psalm 5.4:

"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you."

Is Allah holy in Islam? Of course, we agree that He has other attributes as well, but holiness is one of God's supreme attributes according to the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. You will recall that the Apostle Peter affirmed this when he quoted God in Leviticus: *"Be holy for I am holy"*. That's why defilement was such a serious matter in God's eyes. It was/is a breach against His holiness.

Let's look again at what Jesus had to say about defilement in Mark's gospel. (This teaching can also be found in The Apostle Matthew's gospel, chapter 15.)

Mark 7:14-23

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." 17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

I did not site this passage because of the matter of food, even though it certainly does address that. Rather, I brought it up because it shows us Jesus' theology on the source of defilement--*the heart*. One Muslim person I know had a number of things to say about what defiles a person, and here was one of them that he wrote in an email to me:

"Adam and Hw'wa were defiled by something that came in." March 5, 2010

This statement takes us back to the beginning, and I agree with it. Our first parents *were* defiled. They were defiled by a choice they made. They were defiled by something they ingested. And the nature of their defilement is crucial to observe. Yes, they were tempted to eat of the fruit of that tree by an outside force, but they were nevertheless defiled indeed. The seriousness and duration of their defilement is one dual question we must consider now, along with some related

questions: 1) What, if any, were the consequences of their defilement? 2) Did their defilement affect future generations, and if so, in what ways and to what extent? I won't presume to answer those questions just yet. Besides, I think you already know what I believe, do you not? For now let us be content in knowing that we agree on their defilement. But let me also make some observations from this nascent story:

1. There was nothing inherent in that tree or its fruit that was evil (I think we agree on this).
2. Rather, Adam and Eve were defiled by doing something that is otherwise an innocent act.
3. Thus doing a seemingly "innocent" thing that God forbids or advises against is defiling.
4. The gravity or duration of personal defilement depended on the weight of the act and intent, and how long it takes for a defiled person to repent and become "undefiled" (choose the best word).
5. Even when a person becomes "undefiled", it seems apparent that they still may suffer consequences. I know that is true in my own experience when I have defiled myself. ...How about you?
6. The Bible describes the initial *affects* of Adam & Eve's defilement. I'm not sure about the Qur'an.
7. The Bible also describes all humans since then as being pervasively and repeatedly defiled by the things they choose to do (or not do), eat, or say. Indeed, the earth is filled with defilement because of people who defile themselves and each other, over and over and over again.

How about you...what things have you done to defile yourself? How transparent do you dare to be? If we were to watch a movie about *you* from God's point of view, showing all that you've done and said and thought that defiled you before God, what would we see? When you found that you had indeed defiled yourself, what did you do about it? Did it successfully undefile you?

Here is something from the Prophet Isaiah about this subject (chapter 24:5-6):

*"The earth lies defiled
under its inhabitants;
for they have transgressed the laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore a curse devours the earth,
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt"*

Here's another related passage from the Prophet Isaiah (chapter 59:1-12)

*1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
2 but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.
3 For your hands are defiled with blood*

*and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies;
your tongue mutters wickedness.*

4 *No one enters suit justly;
no one goes to law honestly;
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,
they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.*

5 *They hatch adders' eggs;
they weave the spider's web;
he who eats their eggs dies,
and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched.*

6 *Their webs will not serve as clothing;
men will not cover themselves with what they make.
Their works are works of iniquity,
and deeds of violence are in their hands.*

7 *Their feet run to evil,
and they are swift to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;
desolation and destruction are in their highways.*

8 *The way of peace they do not know,
and there is no justice in their paths;
they have made their roads crooked;
no one who treads on them knows peace.*

9 *Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not overtake us;
we hope for light, and behold, darkness,
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.*

10 *We grope for the wall like the blind;
we grope like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight,
among those in full vigor we are like dead men.*

11 *We all growl like bears;
we moan and moan like doves;
we hope for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.*

12 *For our transgressions are multiplied before you,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:*

The rest of the chapter adds even more weight to the idea that all humanity is defiled by sin and all kinds of evil. Even if you make exception for "prophets" that still leaves the other 99% of humanity.

One thing we should be noting from these passages is that people become defiled *primarily* by their own evil and wickedness, the choices they make, the things they do, what they think about and what they want or don't want. And all people have defiled themselves. The Prophet David in the Psalms (Zabour) had much to say on this subject. Here's part of Psalm 14 (other Psalms say similar things):

*1 The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are **corrupt**, they do abominable deeds,
there is none who does good.*

*2 The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.*

*3 They have all turned aside; together they have become **corrupt**;
there is none who does good,
not even one.*

This passage highlights the universality of corruption, another kind of defilement. Finally, the Apostle Paul talked about defilement in his inspired letter to Titus:

*10 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers...Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the **defiled** and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are **defiled**. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work. Titus 1:10-16*

Let's jump ahead again to consider the teaching of Jesus in Mark's gospel which I pasted above. According to Jesus, it is the heart which is the "wellspring" of defilement. Now, you made a very good point in saying that Adam and Eve seem to have experienced an outside source of defilement. Very well noted! But there are two possibilities: Either 1) They were the *exception* because they were the very first people to experience defilement, after which subsequent generations of humans acquired an *inner* source, or 2) even Adam and Eve had an inner source that drove them to eat that fruit. Logically, if the fruit itself was not unclean, it was the choice that Adam and Eve made to eat it that defiled them, which we have already observed. The flame of that desire, though fanned by Satan, must have arisen--or been aroused--from within them (unless you believe that Satan implanted that irresistible desire within them).

One way or the other, Adam and Eve were defiled; at least my Muslim friend says so, and I agree. What Jesus was pointing to was the simple fact that many of the types of evil that defile us germinate in the heart and grow out from that place. At first they're invisible to outside observers, but we know they're in there. He even made a list of them for us: *evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting (desiring what is not yours), wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. Then he said that "All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."* (Mark 7:21-23)

So even if there are some things that defile a person from outside sources (the early gentile Christians were not allowed to eat meat sacrificed to idols) the point is that the vast majority of sins grow out of the seeds of evil in the heart, or the soul. They may or may not result in evil deeds (though they often do), but even if they don't they are still things that defile us when they are invisibly growing in the heart.

Here is another interesting statement by the Apostle James about the origin of sin:

"But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin..." James 1:14 (We will come back to this passage.)

Here James says that sin flows out of desire, and we both know where the seat of desire is--*the heart*. I believe this is corroborated by human experience; at least *my* personal experience. And again, according to Jesus in the previous passage, we are accountable for the contents of our hearts as well as our deeds.

Another thing that the Apostle James says is complementary to this. Here he talks about the tongue, or the human capacity to express things with words. See what he says about the words we use:

"How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, defiling the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ...with it we curse people...and from the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so." (3:5-10)

Here the Apostle James is saying that even our words can defile us and counted as sin against us. And where do our words originate? From our hearts and our minds, the inner sources the person.

My final quote from the Apostle James comes from chapter 4.1-4:

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people!"

Here the Apostle clearly explains that quarrels and fights (i.e. wars) and even murder come about because of these same inner causes: the "passions and desires that war within you".

All these things say a lot about the human heart and what's wrong with it (us). Let's go back to the Hebrew Scriptures for a moment. The Prophet Jeremiah says in chapter 29 that...

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (v.9)

Here's another verse I just rediscovered from the story of Noah:

"...for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. 8:21b

And so it is the heart that defiles a person in the eyes of God for it is infected with evil desires and motives. This brings us back to Jesus in the Gospel of the Apostle John. This is something I wanted to talk about a long time ago, but you didn't. Look with me again to Jesus' teaching in chapter 3 where he said:

"And this is the Judgment [on humanity], that the light [truth and righteousness] has come into the world, but people loved the darkness [evil and defilement] more than they love the light..." We know that "because their deeds were evil." (v.19)

So again, this is the condition of the human heart. It is bent toward darkness, not light. But God is a God of light, and in Him is no darkness at all. That is why people don't love Him the way that He expects to be loved. That's why people don't Obey God all the time and in every way, and that's why they do so many evil and detestable things. That's because people are defiled and why they keep on defiling themselves before God. And *that's* why God will not allow them to enter into His holy presence in His heavenly kingdom.

In the last book of the Greek scriptures is the Book of Revelation, a.k.a. the *Apocalypse of the Apostle John*, where there is a description of the New Heaven and the New Earth. In chapter 21 it says this:

The New Heaven and the New Earth

1 *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment....8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." ...27 But nothing unclean [defiled] will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

So as we can see from that text, being defiled is a very serious matter in God's eyes, serious enough to preclude people from heaven. You can see in v. 8 that some of the types of defiled people are defined as ones destined for hell: *"the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars."* (It's interesting to note that hell is described as the "second death.") Therefore this is a very important list when we combine it with the one that Jesus already provided in Mark. There are several more lists like this in the books of Romans 1:29-30 and Galatians 5:19-21. Look at these lists...are you guilty of any of these, now or in your past?

The last sentence of the second passage states that *"those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* (Gal.5:21) So if you go to hell it will not be because you are a Muslim, it will be because you have some of these serious *defiling* transgressions on your record. And the Almighty God does not merely acquit the guilty. (Nahum 1:3)

Also note the reference to the "Lamb's book of Life" in Revelation chapter 21. There is another reference similar to it in chapter 20.

Let me share something about myself now. I have defiled myself with almost all of these sins, from the time I was young until now. There was a time when my life was polluted with these things and I didn't feel bad about it. Later, when I started to feel bad about them I didn't seem to have the power to change. And even if I could have changed I knew that my heart was deeply defiled and infected by strong desires and urges to indulge my ungodly appetites. I was like a person with AIDS for which there is no human cure, or a murderer whose victims could never be brought back. I was rightfully condemned before God because of my offenses, and so are you.

So now we must try to answer the most crucial question: Once we have become defiled with any of these things, and we are in a *state* of defilement before God, what can be done about it? To begin to answer this question we will go back to Leviticus in the Hebrew Scriptures. Starting with the time of the Exodus from Egypt and the Israelites' 40-year wandering, Almighty God used the Prophet Moses to teach the people about His holiness and the things that defiled them in His eyes. He taught them that for every sinful act of defilement (intentional or unintentional) He required an appropriate act of cleansing, or "atonement". God was very specific about these things and left nothing uncovered. I mean, there was a law for *everything!* Here's an example from Leviticus 4:27-35

"If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering... And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar...And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish and lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill it for a sin offering...Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar...and burn it on the altar...And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven."

The next chapter, Leviticus 5, goes on in much the same vein to prescribe the types of blood sacrifices that must be offered for unintentional sins against the Lord ("ignorance of the law is no excuse"), and the specific conditions that must be met in keeping with Almighty God's great holiness. Let me just give you the last paragraph of that:

17 *"If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. 18 He shall*

bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the Lord.” Lev. 5:17-19

Note again that these passages talk about the guilt incurred for unintentional sins, and all guilt defiles. In each case an atonement (covering) was made through a blood sacrifice, and only then was forgiveness made possible. Remember, Almighty God does not just excuse guilt or acquit the guilty (Nahum 1:3). The defilement had to be removed by blood coupled with repentance and confession. Now if this was the case for unintentional sin, what do you suppose it was for *intentional* sin? To make a more thorough study of this, keep reading Leviticus. Then go back through Exodus, then go forward again to read Numbers (from which I quoted already) and Deuteronomy. Early Jewish culture of that time (and before and after) was saturated in all this. This was part of the Jewish "Shariah", as it were, prescribed by God! One of the main intents of these specific laws of sacrifice and atonement was to teach people of the seriousness of sin, guilt and defilement in God's eyes; no sin could simply be forgiven or overlooked. Mere repentance was not enough. God would hold a person accountable for every sin of any type—major or minor—and would require the prescribed recompense for it. Every instance or act of sin was seen as an offense against a Holy and Righteous God, and a defilement of the human soul. Therefore, an undefiling or cleansing of sin was necessary.

If we skip ahead now to Leviticus 17 we can see precisely why blood was prescribed by Almighty God. The whole of the chapter talks about how "the life is in the blood", and that's what made blood efficacious for the cleansing of human sin. Please read that chapter. In it you can see first that there were strict laws instituted by God concerning the shedding of blood, even the blood of animals. That's partly why murdering humans was forbidden too. There was also a law forbidding humans from consuming blood; they were always required to drain the blood before eating the flesh. And there were very stiff penalties for violations. Let me paste one excerpt for you here to emphasize the point:

10 "If any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from among his people. 11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. 12 Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood."

Give special attention to the underlined verse in which it is stated that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." I shall not go into the biological validity of that, but there is a very spiritual truth to that statement as well. And I hope you can appreciate the logic of the assertion even if you disagree with it. Whether you agree or not, that is what Almighty God commanded through Moses. Is this not the reason why Muslims abstain from blood as well? I believe so. The essence of life is somehow contained in the blood and is therefore precious; in it is the power of atonement. Atonement is a spiritual concept that is also part of Christian theology, which stems from this Mosaic Law. (I have observed that this principle is still deeply engrained in Western

cultural values, which is partly why the blood is usually drained away from meat when it is butchered and packed for consumption in most supermarkets today.)

Atonement is a doctrine that was central to Jewish theology, which is why *incessant* animal sacrifice was prescribed, and was even the basis for Passover. (Recall that the Hebrews in Egypt were told to kill lambs or goats and apply their blood to their doorframes to prevent the "destroying angel" from killing their firstborn children during the last plague on the Egyptians.) So atonement was meant as a covering for human sin, or even as a means of expunging it. Only by blood atonement could the people be purified and undefiled. (In many cases the law required the sprinkling of blood onto a person's flesh or garments, or an object to be sanctified.) We can even see this in accounts from before Moses' time. Before he was murdered, Able made a blood sacrifice. And Abraham made several. Between Abel and Abraham there was Noah. He was commanded to take seven of each of the "clean" animals on the ark, but only two of every other kind. When the ark finally rested on land after the flood, Noah and his family sacrificed them. You can find that in Genesis 8:20-21. Regarding blood sacrifice, I observe that there parallels in Islamic theology and practice, as well as for atonement?

The point is clear, I hope: God put the life-force of humans and animals in the blood, so blood was and is sacred. And when God's holy laws were broken, no "equal and opposite" good deeds would suffice to make amends. Restitution to the violated persons might bring about justice in certain circumstances, but never with Almighty God. Sorrow and repentance on the part of the law-breaker were essential, yes, but never sufficient to satisfy the much higher justice of God. Thus, blood atonement was always God's means of extending mercy. In point of fact, according to Mosaic law, it was only *because* of God's mercy that He would even accept atonement in light of His perfect justice, which would otherwise demand the most severe punishment. We agree that, His mercy notwithstanding, the Almighty is a God of wrath and judgment for all those who do not repent and worship Him as He prescribes. His judgment is righteous and just.

*"The Lord sits enthroned forever;
he has established his throne for justice,
and he judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with uprightness."* Psalm 9:7-8

Now the (Real) Good News

This brings us now to the New Testament again, to the book of Hebrews. It may be of interest to note that Paul was not the writer of Hebrews, but it is nonetheless consistent with his writings in Romans, and the teachings of Jesus himself as recorded in the gospels. Hebrews is a theological masterpiece, inspired by Almighty God and written for the Jewish Christian community of the first century. In it we discover divine teachings in direct correlation to those of Leviticus, and the new covenant resolution to the old covenant problem: the deeply engrained and universal defilement of the human soul. Chapter 9 is a good example of that. Please read this. It addresses specifically and profoundly what was presented in Leviticus, which is one of the many examples of the continuity between the old and new testaments of scripture.

First, consider this on the subject of blood and its power of atonement in God's order.

"Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.' And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood; without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Heb. 9:18-22

Please consider this passage from earlier in the chapter:

"But when Christ appeared...he entered once for all into the holy places [where only the Jewish high priest was allowed to enter] not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God." 9:11-14

Just one more from this chapter (vv. 24-26):

For Christ has entered...into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, or then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Let me just highlight that the last sentence does not mean that there is no more sin in the world, because there certainly is; nor does it mean that Christ has automatically cleansed every person from their sin. It only means that he has made a permanent atonement for sin, a once-for-all provision for the application of God's mercy to those who believe, repent, and trust *His* perfect means of spiritual cleansing rather than attempt "self-cleansing". Yes, both the ancient Jewish and Christian faiths have known that such "self-cleansing" is humanistic and utterly futile. Only the Almighty God can purify a terminally defiled soul, and He does that with blood. Further, Christ's blood is the only blood that is thoroughly and eternally sufficient for this purpose.

Please consider this final verse from next chapter of Hebrews (10):

"But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." (12-14)

This shall be my concluding paragraph. Let me make this personal. There's no arguing with the state of the world and the people that inhabit it. Humanity reeks from the spiritual pollution we've dumped into God's created order. We've literally poisoned the world with the toxic sludge of sin, wickedness and ambivalence toward God and each other. And each one of us is an

individual microcosm of that collective human pollution. Humanity is hopelessly defiled before God! Humanity is defiled because each person is defiled. That includes you. Yes, you are a polluted person, desperately defiled before the pure Righteousness and Holiness that is Almighty God. Left to your natural condition, you will be judged and found guilty of offenses against God that have rendered you unrighteous and unclean. You will therefore be sentenced to death and hell. It is not because you are a Muslim, but because you are a human. Believe me, my state was no different at one time, and had my life ended then I would be in hell now. But Christ has purified me by his blood and given me his righteousness. Now I know that I am no longer polluted and defiled in God's eyes. And I *know* I will be received into paradise. That is the *real* good news. God has given Christ to do for you what you cannot hope to do for yourself, and to reconcile you to God.

I am calling you to embrace Christ as Lord and Savior so you also may become undefiled and saved from God's wrath; so you may indeed receive God's mercy through Christ's blood.