

HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

The Power of the Blood

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Today, we conclude this month's series of messages on "Healing and Deliverance." This is a large subject—one which characterized the ministry of Jesus Christ, as our theme verse reveals:

You know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

Over the course of this month, I have spoken of the need to build a reserve of grace through personal prayer, and to restore a root of prosperity through personal covenant with God, and, last week, of authority to overthrow demonic influences through trust in the Sovereign God and His Word, acting in the powerful name of Jesus.

I cannot conclude this topic without addressing the ultimate source of this grace and authority. Without this single gift, all our hopes would be empty. Without this single provision, all the promises in which we trust would be meaningless. There is no substitute at all for it.

If you are going to look to anything at all to secure your salvation, and all that accompanies it—anything at all that makes following Jesus better than any other religion or philosophy—you must look to this: the power of the blood of Jesus.

There are at least 43 references to the blood of Christ in the New Testament, all testifying to its great importance in the salvation and daily life of the believer.

Judas the betrayer spoke of it as "*innocent blood*" (Matthew 27:4) and Peter called it "*the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:9). It is the *cleansing* blood (1 John 1:7) and the *washing* blood (Revelation 1:5), because it removes the guilt of our sins. Paul called it the *purchasing* blood (Acts 20:28) and the *redeeming* blood (Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14), thus declaring that Christ's shed blood was the very price of our salvation. So it is also the *justifying* blood (Romans 5:9) and the *peacemaking* blood (Colossians 1:20). Its efficacy doesn't end with our salvation, however, for it is also the *sanctifying* blood (Hebrews 13:12). There is infinite and eternal power in the blood of Christ, for it is "*the blood of the everlasting covenant*" (Hebrews 13:20). Emphasizing this, the first New Testament reference to His blood was by Jesus Himself, who said, at the last supper: "*This is my blood of the new testament (or 'covenant') which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28).

The Church has spoken and sung of power in the blood, of being redeemed by the blood, washed in the blood, justified by the blood, covered by the blood, sprinkled with the blood, and pleading the blood in prayer.

Outsiders tend to hear these things as bizarre or creepy, while insiders regard them as appropriate, although some find them distasteful to say aloud—like holding your nose while swallowing bitter medicine. Others speak of these things frequently, as if psyching themselves up for a challenge or uttering part of a magical incantation.

Perhaps God will help me today to underscore the Biblical appropriateness of the subject, while at the same time removing the apparent necessity to sound or act weird.

I want to show you the two purposes for the bloody theme of our faith, and three effects of this aspect of our creed. The first purpose is...

Substitution

It is generally recognized, around the world, that our life is in our blood (Leviticus 17:11). If I lose my blood, I will certainly also lose my life. This makes the blood the most valuable aspect of a life. Many primitive cultures believed that to drink the fresh blood of a victim was to ingest their life force also. Similarly, to pour out the blood of a victim as an offering, was regarded as the greatest gift that one could offer to one's god.

So, the ancient Hebrew people understood it as fitting when Jehovah God told them that *“without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness for sin”* (Hebrews 9:22) and required the blood sacrifice of bulls and goats and sheep to atone for the sins of the people. In this way, the concept of substitution was introduced to their faith and affirmed repeatedly.

While Moses taught that sin led inevitably to death, and that each person must die for their own (not others') sins, substitution was permitted if offered thoughtfully, in a prescribed manner. Thus, the concept of substitution was presented as the hope for “second chances” and moving forward after even major blunders.

Two weeks ago, we read about the dedication of Solomon's Temple, an occasion for the ritual slaughter of 122,000 animals, as an expression of lavish thanks to God. Now, before you pull out your PETA cards to object, consider also that the Hebrews recognized their livestock as God's gift and reward to them for following Him—part of the promised “healing of their land.” And if God who gave them asked His people to give them back to Him in this way, as a covering or atonement for their sins, it was neither extravagant nor inappropriate.

Since the day that Israel was released from four centuries of slavery in Egypt, when God prescribed the ritual slaughter of “a lamb for each household,” and painting the doorway to each home with its blood, it became, for the Hebrew people, an entirely appropriate form of worship.

Then, God engraved that ceremony in their nation’s history by prescribing an annual commemoration—the Passover—including the offering of a Paschal lamb (Hebrew: *Korban Pesach*). The animal chosen and raised for the annual sacrifice became known as the “lamb of God.”

So, when John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus from Nazareth and said to his disciples, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), they were able to grasp the imagery John used (though they apparently did not understand how Jesus would eventually play that role).

Like a laser, God gathered the dim lights of millions of sacrificial animals into a single brilliant beam to spotlight Jesus as His ultimate Substitute for humanity’s sin.

1 Peter 1:18 For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. ¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

Now, when we talk about the blood of Jesus, we’re referring to that substitution—a wondrous exchange!—He shed His blood in the place of a million more sheep, and, more importantly, in the place of our blood. His solitary life for the rest of the human race. His divine righteousness in exchange for our collective sinfulness. His freedom in exchange for our captivity. His eternal life in exchange for our spiritual death. His heaven in exchange for our hell.

Apart from the shedding of Jesus’ blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. “*Salvation comes no other way; no other name has been or will be given to us by which we can be saved, only this one*” (Acts 4:12; MSG). Jesus Christ is our Substitute. That’s why He alone is our Savior.

Please take note, I am not speaking of Jesus’ blood while it flowed within His veins, for it is not that fluid—the substance—that we revere. Though His blood was pure and uncorrupted by sin (for He Himself was sinless), that is not the cause of our reverence, for as long as it flowed in His veins we were dead in our sins.

It was God’s appointment and Jesus’ corresponding action—the sacrifice of His blood through His death on the cross—that made Him the Lamb of God and gave His blood its eternal value. We use the word “blood,” as the Bible so often did, as a figure of speech for His substitutionary death. That was the first purpose for His shed blood and the reason we esteem it.

Whenever we mention His name—Jesus—we are also pointing to His substitutionary sacrifice (His shed blood) on our behalf. Without it—and without your confidence in it—there is no hope for you of salvation or of eternal life with God.

This promise, and all of its underpinnings, has been codified in the Bible—recorded there for all ensuing generations to discover and embrace by faith. Substitution is the first reason we speak so highly of the blood.

The second purpose for the blood theme of Christianity is...

Covenant

On His last night together with His disciples, after the Passover meal (*Seder*) was eaten, Jesus lifted up the *Barech* (Cup of Redemption)—the final cup of the Passover ceremony—and blessed God our Father, then passed it to His disciples around the table with these words:

“Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many” (Matthew 26:27-28).

The death of Jesus on the cross—the shedding of His blood—was more than an isolated act of grace. It was the seal of an everlasting covenant between God and humanity.

The redemption that Christ bought, the freedom that He purchased was not for His contemporaries alone, but for all humanity and all creation for all time.

Colossians 1:19 *For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ,²⁰ and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ’s blood on the cross.*

Hebrews 9:12 *With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.*

Hebrews 13:20 *Now may the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, and ratified an eternal covenant with his blood—²¹ may he equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him.*

Because of the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, this covenant is universally applicable and eternally beneficial. All that it requires at our end is our trusting agreement. With the “signature” of your faith, it becomes yours forever!

This gift of God's grace will never be retracted. Jesus said, *"Those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them"* (John 6:37). He will never withdraw His promise to save you, as long as you trust in "His blood"—that is, His substitutionary death for you.

These, then, are the wonderful reasons we speak of the blood of Jesus with such fervor: first, His death was a substitutionary payment for our sins, and, second, it initiated an everlasting covenant of undeserved acceptance and kindness from God.

Now, let me speak of three effects of the shedding of Christ's blood—an immediate effect, a gradual effect, and an eventual effect.

Immediate Effect: Forgiveness of Sin

Our forgiveness has been hard won. Jesus described our redemption as something *"impossible for men"* to achieve, but *"possible for God"* (Matthew 19:26). Sin accumulates a debt (I don't think there is anyone here today who is not familiar with indebtedness). No amount of repentance or remorse could alter the path of destruction and damnation we were on. Salvation is free (to us), but it is not cheap! It cost God His Son, and it cost Jesus His life.

Oswald Chambers said, "We trample the blood of the Son of God if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only explanation for the forgiveness of God and for the unfathomable depth of His forgetting is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the outcome of our personal realization of the atonement which He has worked out for us. It does not matter who or what we are; there is absolute reinstatement into God by the death of Jesus Christ and by no other way, not because Jesus Christ pleads, but because He died. It is not earned, but accepted. All the pleading which deliberately refuses to recognize the Cross is of no avail; it is battering at a door other than the one that Jesus has opened. Our Lord does not pretend we are all right when we are all wrong. The atonement is a propitiation whereby God, through the death of Jesus, makes an unholy man holy."

The Scriptures are clear about this:

Ephesians 1:7 *He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.*

Colossians 1:13 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*

The forgiveness Jesus purchased for us is so complete that our sins, though not removed from history, are no longer an issue between us and Holy God. They are totally covered by the shed blood of Jesus. In Ireland, some time ago, a teacher asked a little boy if there was anything that God could not do. The little fellow said: “Yes, He cannot see my sins through the blood of Christ.”

Our sin is the only foothold that Satan had on us. He could accuse us and harass us because of our sins. But the shed blood of Jesus has put an end to that, too, if you will trust in it.

Hebrews 2:14 *Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death.¹⁵ Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.*

Revelation 12:10 *Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night.¹¹ And they have defeated [the accuser] by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die.*

Your “testimony” is the story of your faith in Jesus—His death (His blood) and His resurrection. It is not the content of your story, nor the telling of your story, that defeats the devil (the accuser), but the substance of your story: your faith in Christ, crucified and resurrected. If *faith* is your persistent story, the devil’s accusations will never stick.

That is the immediate effect of the death of Jesus, but there is more!

Gradual Effect: Cleansing the Conscience

Hebrews 9:13 *Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity.¹⁴ Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.*

Freedom to worship is the result of a clear conscience; without it, we feel uncomfortable in the presence of God. It is one thing to be released from guilt by an act of forgiveness; it is yet another thing to be freed from haunting regrets and self-condemnation. Yet, because of the shed blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit provides that, too!

Hebrews 10:21 And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house,²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

¹ *John 1:7* But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Notice the present tense of the verb in that verse: *cleanses*. This effect began when we first put our trust in Christ, but it continues actively to cleanse us, as we stay in fellowship with God through faith in Christ. It is not only a promise for your yesterdays, but also for all of your tomorrows. Be forgiven! Be clean!

What a life! Why would I consider any other? Why would I choose any other? Why would I leave this covenanted life to pursue other things?

And there is yet a third effect, which is not immediate, but eventual...

Eventual Effect: With Him in Paradise

Jesus said to the thief who was crucified at His side, *"I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). For the thief it was "today," because that was his last day on earth, the day he drew his last breath. For most of us, that promise is less immediate, but just as certain.

Jesus has not cleansed us from sin, just to send us out to play (to make us fit for this life alone). From the beginning, His objective was for us to be with Him, forever.

Ephesians 2:13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to [God] through the blood of Christ.

As a result, you and I may enjoy the *presence* and *friendship* of God every day.

Hebrews 10:19 And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.

More than that, He has fitted us for divine service, both in this life and the next, as John described in the Revelation.

Revelation 5:7 He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne.⁸ And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people.⁹ And they sang a new song with these words:

*“You are worthy to take the scroll
and break its seals and open it.
For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.
¹⁰ And you have caused them to become
a Kingdom of priests for our God.
And they will reign on the earth.”*

We will reign on the earth, and we will worship in Heaven—loving and serving our Savior—throughout eternity.

Every gift, every capacity, all knowledge, and all wisdom—these wonderful gifts of God—are enhanced for us by our confidence in the shed blood of Jesus.

If you want your prayers to prosper, offer them in the confidence that the blood of Jesus—His death on the cross—has paved the way for you to God and given you God’s ear. Someone has said, “One drop of Christ’s blood upon a prayer must make it prosper.”

Let no one, therefore, ever count the *“blood of the covenant... an unholy thing”* (Hebrews 10:29), for the blood of Christ is forever innocent, infinitely precious, perfectly justifying, always cleansing, and fully sanctifying.

This is why we celebrate His blood (His death). This is what it means to trust in the blood of Christ.