

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus
Hebrews 9:11-14

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
O Precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Our Christian tradition is filled with songs and hymns that mention blood and specifically the blood of Jesus. “Nothing but the Blood,” “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood,” “Are You Washed in the Blood,” “There Is Power in the Blood,” and more are still favorites of many of us. To Charles Wesley, co-founder of the Methodist movement from which we draw our heritage, blood and its imagery were so important it appears more than 800 times in the plethora of hymns he wrote. Blood is an important theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. M.R. DeHaan once stated, “The Bible is a Book of blood and a bloody book.” When we consider the cross, we are forced to give consideration to blood.

Images portrayed to us on television, video games, movies, news reports, and the like suggest that blood is evidence of evil, death, and sin. This perspective has caused some to downplay or even eliminate the significance of blood in the Bible. “God is a loving, caring Being,” we are told, “who seeks to restore, heal, and reconcile. He is the author of relationship. God would never destroy or harm. And, He certainly would not kill His own Son!” Similar language and teaching has been circulating for millennia, and is prominent even in the church.

But if we are to properly understand the work of Jesus, we cannot sidestep the fact that blood is important to, and indeed is the power of, the Gospel. Sin keeps us separated from God and without His forgiveness there can be no reconciliation. Somehow, we must be cleansed from our sin. Without cleansing we are “*dead in our transgressions and sins*” (Eph. 2:1). What we need is life. How can we be made alive again?

We find the beginning of our answer in Leviticus 17, *“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement by the life in the blood”* (17:11). Life, that mysterious something which scientists have never yet been able to define or fathom, God says is in the blood. Every doctor and nurse knows there can be no life without blood. The average human body has only 8-10 pints of blood at any given time. It takes a drop of blood only 23 seconds to travel the round trip of 6-9 miles of vessels throughout the body carrying necessary oxygen and nutrients needed by each cell to sustain life and constant reproduction of the cells while at the same time removing carbon dioxide, waste, and impurities. The life of the physical body is dependent on blood.

God takes this known significance of blood as necessary to physical life and creates a means by which the people could find forgiveness of sin and restoration of relationship with God. God declares, *“It is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life”* (Lev. 17:11). The blood of an innocent animal was shed releasing its life as a covering over the death associated with the sin of the person offering the sacrifice.

But while the blood of bulls and sheep and goats covered over the death, it could not remove the source of death which is sin. So these sacrifices had to be offered continuously. That is why we read further in Hebrews, *“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire ... with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased”* (10:6). God was not pleased because, while he provided a means for our relationship with Him to survive temporarily, it could not provide everlasting life. The animal offered was a substitute for the life of the person who offered it, but it could not take the place of the human life. Animals are of the created order and do not have the image of God. Listen to how the writer of Hebrews states it (**Read Text Here**).

In order for us to be completely restored in relationship with God, the blood of one who is human, carries the image of God, and cannot perish is the only One who can restore our life.

We need the blood of the One who is “*just as we are – yet was without sin*” (Heb. 4:15). We need Immanuel, God with us, who came down to earth and took on human form so that humans might be restored fully. We need Jesus.

Peter exclaims, “*You know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect*” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The 24 elders in heaven proclaim of Jesus, “*You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men and women for God from every tribe and language and people and nation*” (Rv.5:9) Paul confirms, “*In [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us*” (Eph. 1:7-8). And John Wesley said on his deathbed, “*There is no other way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.*”

Perhaps this story will give a sense of what I have shared as well as the depth of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ. Imagine the following:

You’re at church in worship when somebody runs in from the parking lot and says, “Turn on a radio, turn on a radio” While the church listens through the sound system this announcement is made: Two women are lying in a Long Island hospital dying from a mysterious flu-like illness that is spreading rapidly across the nation. People are working around the clock trying to find an antidote. Nothing is working. California, Oregon, Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts; it’s as though it’s sweeping in from the borders.

And then, all of a sudden, the news interrupts: The code has been broken. A cure is found. A vaccine can be made. But, it’s going to take the blood of somebody who hasn’t been infected. All through the Midwest, through the channels of the emergency broadcasting system, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, everyone is asked to do one simple thing: “Go to your local hospital and

have a blood sample taken. That's all we ask of you. When you hear the sirens go off in your neighborhood, please make your way quickly, quietly, and safely to the hospital."

Sure enough, when you and your family get there late on Friday night, there is a long line with nurses and doctors pricking fingers, taking blood, and labeling it. Your wife, kids, and you all have your blood drawn. Then they tell you to wait in the parking lot and listen for your name. If you don't hear it you can return home.

You stand around with your neighbors scared, wondering what in the world is going on and if this is the end of the world. Suddenly, a young man comes running out of the hospital screaming, calling a name, and waving a clipboard. He yells it again and your son tugs on your jacket and says, "Daddy, that's me."

Before you know it, they have grabbed your boy. "Wait a minute. Hold on!" you holler.

"It's okay, his blood is clean. His blood is pure. We want to make sure he doesn't have the disease."

Five tense minutes later, out come the doctors and nurses, crying and hugging one another. Some are even laughing. It's the first time you have seen anyone laughing in a week. An old doctor walks up to you and says, "Thank you, sir. Your son's blood is perfect. It's clean. It's pure. Now we can make the vaccine."

As word spreads, people are screaming and praying, and laughing, and crying. But the gray old doctor pulls you and your wife aside. "May we see you for a moment? We didn't realize that the donor would be a minor and we need ... we need you to sign a consent form."

You begin to sign and then see that the number of pints of blood to be taken is left empty. "How many pints?"

The old doctor's smile fades as he says, "We had no idea it would be a little child. We weren't prepared. We need it all!"

“But-but ... You don’t understand, this is my only son.”

“We are talking about the world here. Please ... sign. We-we need it all!”

“But can’t you give him a transfusion?”

“If we had clean blood we would. Can you sign? Would you sign?” In numb silence, you do.

Then they say, “Would you like to have a moment with him before we begin?”

You walk back, though your whole being screams not to. You walk back to that room where he sits on a table saying, “Dad? Mom? What’s going on?” You take his hands and say, “Son, we love you and we would never let anything happen to you that didn’t just have to be. Do you understand?”

The old doctor comes back in and says, “I’m sorry, we’ve got to get started. People all over the world are dying.”

You walk out while your son stretches out his hand and cries out, “Dad, mom, why have you forsaken me?”

The next week, there is a ceremony to honor your son. Some folks sleep through it. Some folks don’t come because they go to the lake or have some other “priority.” Some folks come with a pretentious smile and just pretend to care. Would you want to jump up and say, “My son died so you could live. Don’t you know how much I care?”

This is all my hope and peace: Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my righteousness: Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O Precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;

No other fount I know; nothing but the blood of Jesus.