

SERIES: The Absolute Supremacy of Christ in Hebrews  
 SERMON: *Nothing But the Blood*  
 SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 9:11-28  
 SPEAKER: Pastor Josh Black  
 DATE: February 7, 2010

### **The Bible is Bloody**

The Bible is bloody. From Genesis to Revelation blood covers the pages of this book. Why is the Bible so bloody? It is bloody because of sin. The Bible is clear that the penalty for sin against God is death. Blood represents life when it is in the body (Lev. 17:11). But when blood is outside of the body it represents death, for that is not natural. Most of the references to blood in the Bible are made in reference to death, not life. Where there is blood there is evidence of death, and death is required because of sin.

But we live in a culture that tends to downplay sin and the consequences of sin. We tend to see humanity as basically good and so the notion of a God who would punish sin and deal out wrath seems absurd, barbaric, or maybe even downright mean.

Someone sent me a link this week to *The Positive Bible: From Genesis to Revelation; Scripture that Inspires, Nurtures and Heals*. Apparently the editor of this Bible has cut out everything he deems negative in the Bible and left only the positive. Most Bibles have around 1000 pages; this Bible has only 300 pages. Anything dealing with violence, wrath or judgment has been cut. My guess is there is no blood in this Bible. As a matter of fact the last few chapters of each of the Gospels are missing – because crucifixion is apparently not “positive.” I’d like to read a couple of the reviews from Amazon.com.

One of the reviewers said, *“This is a feel great Bible. Every passage is a great passage. I recommend it.”* While another reviewer says, *“I agree with the other reviewers. This book definitely lives up to its title. On every page is Scripture that is positive and uplifting. But something is missing...the rest of the story. I would argue that we cannot fully appreciate or even understand the positive if we do not understand the negative.”* I agree with the second reviewer.

One reason we see humanity as basically good is that we don’t see God as he actually is. He is holy and awesome and righteous and absolutely glorious. When we see God for who he is, we see ourselves for who we are – sinful and deserving of the wrath of God. But when we only look at other people it’s easy to lower the bar and say, “At least I’m not as bad as they are.”

Listen to this quote from Robert Yarborough. *“At a time when humanity has come to be seen as basically good, the concept of divine wrath seems obscene.”* But not only does wrath seem obscene if humanity is seen as good, Jesus’ work on the cross bears no meaning for us. If we’re basically good then we don’t need to be saved from our sin. Richard Niebuhr has described it this way: *A God without wrath, brings people without sin, into a kingdom without judgment, to a Christ without a cross.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Dever, 2000.

The problem with this view is that the Bible contradicts it at every point. God is a God of wrath (Rom. 1:18); humanity is sinful to the core (Rom. 3:23); and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); but Jesus himself died on a cross to satisfy the wrath of God. So instead of downplaying sin and wrath and blood, let's just deal with it this morning, as the Bible does.

From the moment sin entered the world there was blood. In Genesis 3 we have the record of the fall of Adam and Eve. Directly after the fall God made clothes for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). He made the clothes out of animal skins, which would have required the death of an animal. Many scholars view Genesis 3:21 as the first sacrifice, which God himself made on behalf of Adam and Eve. They ate of the tree and should have died immediately; their blood should have been shed. But God took the life blood of an animal in place of their life. The life of the animal somehow made it possible for Adam and Eve to continue to live in relationship with God.<sup>2</sup>

This idea is explicit in the celebration of the first Passover in Exodus 12. The Israelites were commanded to smear the blood of a lamb on their door posts. Then when God passed through Egypt to strike down all of the first born he would “pass over” the homes that were covered in the blood. Instead of requiring the blood of their first born sons, he would accept the blood of the lamb.

### **The New Covenant is Better**

We've been talking about how the new covenant is better than the old covenant for about four weeks now. Remember that the old covenant, also known as the Mosaic covenant or the Law, consisted of 2 main parts: 1) the commandments, which showed the people of God how to live in a relationship with God, and 2) the sacrificial system, which provided a way for the people of God to maintain a relationship with God even though they were sinful. That sacrificial system included a priesthood, a temple, and sacrifices. We have already seen that Jesus is a better priest than Aaron and that he serves in a better temple, which is heaven. Our passage today continues to show that Jesus is a better priest and serves in a better temple, but we're going to focus mainly on the fact that the sacrificial blood Jesus offers is better than the blood offered under the old covenant.

### **Hebrews 9:11-28**

*<sup>11</sup>When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. <sup>12</sup>He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup>How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

*<sup>15</sup>For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.*

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<sup>2</sup> Yarbrough, R. H. “Atonement.” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

<sup>16</sup>*In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, <sup>17</sup>because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. <sup>18</sup>This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. <sup>19</sup>When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. <sup>20</sup>He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." <sup>21</sup>In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. <sup>22</sup>In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*

<sup>23</sup>*It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup>For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. <sup>25</sup>Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. <sup>26</sup>Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. <sup>27</sup>Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, <sup>28</sup>so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

This morning I want to look at two reasons why the blood of Christ's sacrifice is better than the sacrifice of the old covenant. Let's look now at the first reason.

### **Reason 1: Christ's sacrifice takes away sin.**

There are many different aspects to the sacrificial system under the old covenant, but in chapter 9 the author of Hebrews is specifically referencing the Day of Atonement, which is found in Leviticus 16. As we look closer at the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement we will see the significance of Christ's sacrifice.

#### **The blood of Christ not only forgives sin, it annuls sin.**

On the Day of Atonement the high priest would enter into the most holy place with the blood of a goat. He would place that blood on the mercy seat in the very presence of God, as a sacrifice, to cover the sins of the people. Later he would lay his hands on another goat which was a way to symbolically transfer the sins of the people onto the goat. Then he would send the goat away which symbolized the goat bearing away the sins of the people; this is where we get the term scapegoat.

But did the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement actually provide forgiveness for the people? I've been wrestling with this question all week. Verse 22 seems to indicate that it did.

**9:22** *In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no **forgiveness**.*

The implication here is the blood of the old covenant sacrificial system did provide forgiveness. But look at chapter 10, verses 4 and 11.

**10:4** *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

**10:11** *Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*

I was reminded this week of how important it is to read our Bibles closely. Notice there is a difference of language used. In 9:22 the writer uses the word “forgiveness;” under the old covenant, forgiveness was possible. But in 10:4 and 10:11 it says it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to “take away” sin.

Forgiveness releases us from the punishment of sin. The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement covered sin and therefore sin was forgiven and the wrath of God was held off, but it didn’t take away sin; only Christ’s sacrifice takes away sin. This is seen in verse 26.

**9:26** *But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

One way you could say that Christ’s sacrifice “does away with sin” is to say it “annuls” sin. If you have a marriage annulled then it is as if you were never married, legally. The blood of Christ not only forgives sin, it annuls it.

Another way you could distinguish between the blood of the old covenant and the blood of the new covenant would be to say that the blood of old covenant made propitiation for sin, but the blood of the new covenant offers expiation as well. Now these are big words and I don’t care if you remember the words, but I do want you to remember the concept.

First, let me define these words for you – propitiation means to satisfy the wrath of God and expiation means to wipe away sin. If sin was covered by the blood of animals then God’s wrath would be propitiated; it would be satisfied for a time. But just because God’s wrath was held off for a while, just because there was forgiveness for sin, doesn’t mean that sin was wiped away (expiated).

Think of this in terms of a legal record. If a criminal is pardoned after committing a crime, he is spared the punishment, but the crime is still on his record. Any time he would apply for a job he would have to report the crime. The crime would show up on any background checks. If a criminal’s record is expunged, however, not only is he spared the punishment, but the crime is actually removed from his record. It is as if he never committed the crime. This is what Christ’s blood does for us.

The blood of Christ not only satisfies the wrath of God, it not only provides forgiveness of sin, it actually takes away our sin. Under the old covenant sin was covered for a while so the people could worship for a while. But by the blood of Christ, sin is taken away forever so we can worship God forever!

**The blood of Christ is necessary for our redemption.**

Not only has the blood of Christ taken away our sin, it has redeemed us.

**9:12** *He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal **redemption**.*

So his blood redeems us, but what have we been redeemed from?

**9:14-15** *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from **acts that lead to death**, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a **ransom to set them free from the sins** committed under the first covenant.*

Remember where we began this morning. The wages of sin are death. The reason the Bible is bloody is because we are sinful. Christ's blood redeems us from death.

When the Bible uses the word redeem or ransom it means that Jesus paid the penalty our sins deserve (death). He did this by giving his own life; he shed his blood. He became the Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world. He became our Passover lamb who was slaughtered for us. He poured out his blood so that we don't have to die.

But in the same way that the blood of the lamb had to be applied to the doorposts in faith during the first Passover, the blood of Christ has to be applied in faith with us as well.<sup>3</sup> Would you like your sins removed? Would you like redemption from eternal death? Would you like to experience the cleansing forgiveness of the blood of Jesus? You must place your faith in the sacrifice Jesus has made on your behalf. And placing faith in the work of Christ is not just something done at conversion. We must continually put our faith in what Christ has done on our behalf.

### **The blood of Christ removes all obstacles to worship.**

Why has Jesus done all of this? Verse 14 says he has cleansed us *from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.*

The purpose of redemption is to free us from sin so that we can serve God. The word serve, could also be translated as "worship." God is pure and without sin. If we are going to draw near to God we cannot be polluted by sin. Jesus removes our sin and cleanses us so that we can serve and worship God.

The first reason the blood of Christ's sacrifice is better than the sacrifices under the old covenant is that Christ's sacrifice takes away sin. Let's look now at the second reason.

### **Reason 2: Christ's sacrifice secures eternal life.**

Verses 16 and 17 compare the new covenant with a will. The reason for this is that there is an inheritance attached to the new covenant. A will is created so a person can designate where they want their possessions to go when they die. But those possessions will not be dispersed *until* they die.

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, Colin. *Unlocking the Bible Story, Volume 1.*

**9:16-17** *In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living.*

**The blood of Christ is necessary to inaugurate the new covenant.**

The blood of Christ establishes his death, which is necessary to inaugurate the new covenant. And now that he has died we can receive the *promised eternal inheritance* (v. 15). The old covenant was inaugurated with blood as well, but it was inaugurated with the blood of animals (Ex. 24). Animals are not eternal, they're temporal. A sacrifice can only give what it possesses. Animals possess life, but not eternal life. And so the old covenant was not eternal; it was only temporary. Animal sacrifices provided a way for God's people to live in the presence of God for a while, but not for eternity.

Jesus' life on the other hand is eternal; he has existed eternally and so his people can inherit eternal life. The fact that he is risen from the dead and has ascended to the Father proves that he has conquered death and so all of those who have faith in him will one day inherit the eternal life that he has provided. He has blazed the trail for us to follow.

This is amazing, theologically, but what does it mean for us practically? How are we to live our lives now, in light of the fact that we have eternal life through Jesus?

**Eternal life is “already,” but “not yet.”**

If we have faith in Jesus we “already” have eternal life – it is secure. But we have “not yet” fully experienced the benefits of our eternal inheritance. We are, after all, still living on this earth, and life is not easy here.

On the Day of Atonement when the priest went into the most holy place to offer a sacrifice the people would wait for the priest to come out. They would wait in expectation for him. During their waiting they were afflicted and in a state of mourning. But when the priest would come out of the temple the people would rejoice! The priest's return served as proof that God had accepted the sacrifice, but that is not all. Immediately following the Day of Atonement the Israelites would observe the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a huge seven day celebration, which called for continual rejoicing before the Lord. After God had accepted their sacrifice they were able to party.<sup>4</sup>

In a similar way, we are waiting for our priest to return from the most holy place where he is even now offering his own blood in the presence of the Father for our sin. Now is a time of affliction and we are in a sense mourning – both for our sin and the fact that we still see sin all around us. We need to understand the already/not yet nature of our salvation if we are to persevere in the faith. We can face the hardships of this life because we know eternal life has been secured for us. We can persevere in the affliction of this life, because we know the great wedding feast awaits those of us who belong to the Lamb.

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<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, Victor. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*.

**The blood of Christ is necessary for an invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb.**

Look at verses 26 and 27 with me.

**9:26-27** *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

Judgment is coming and the wrath of God is real. However, we don't have to downplay the wrath of God, because God himself has dealt with it in sending Jesus.

Verse 27 says that when Jesus returns he won't "deal with sin" because it has already been removed for those who have placed their faith in him, but he will in fact "deal with sin;" he will bring judgment on sin. Remember how I said that the Bible is a bloody book all the way from Genesis to Revelation. Let's turn to Revelation 19, which gives a description of Jesus at his second coming.

**Revelation 19:11-16** *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. **He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood**, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." **He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.** On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

Some people interpret this robe that is dipped in blood to mean the blood of Jesus. These verses in Revelation 19, however, borrow language from Isaiah 63 and that context doesn't support that interpretation. If you look at Isaiah 63:3 it becomes clear that the blood being spoken of is the blood of his enemies.

At the end Christ will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, and the blood of his enemies will be on his robes. Then after the enemies of Christ are slaughtered verse 21 of Revelation 19 tells us the birds will come and gorge themselves with the flesh of the dead bodies; the birds will have a feast.

But the thing I find interesting is that right before this feast is described another feast is described beginning in Revelation 19:9; the marriage feast of the Lamb. And that feast is by invitation only. Only those who belong to Christ will share in that joyous feast. Only those who are clothed in the blood and righteousness of Christ will eat with Christ on that great day.

We will either be clothed in the blood of Jesus and adorned with his garments of salvation and dressed in his robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10), *or* our blood will be on his garments when he comes in judgment. We will either join him at the table for a wedding feast, or we will be the feast of judgment. There are only two options.

The Bible is bloody because of sin. And sin is a serious matter in the eyes of a holy and glorious God. We should take sin seriously because God takes it seriously. He took it so seriously that he sent his one and only Son, Jesus, to bear the penalty for our sin. He has dealt with sin in Jesus. Jesus' blood has taken away our sin. Jesus' blood has given us access to an eternal inheritance. Jesus' blood can be applied to your life by faith.

Without the blood of Christ applied to your life by faith the wrath of God is a scary reality. However, if we place our faith in Christ we can face the coming judgment with hope and confidence because of what he has done for us. We can also face the hardships of this life because we know he will return from the heavenly sanctuary to save those who eagerly wait for him. When he returns what a day of rejoicing that will be as we join him at the table for the great wedding feast.

### **The Lord's Table**

The blood Christ shed was the blood of the new covenant. One day those of us who know him will join him at the table, but until that day he asks us to remember him at the Lord's Table. We will observe communion this morning and whether you know him or not, my request for you is the same – would you consider his sacrifice on your behalf? Consider your sin and consider the holiness of God, then consider the amazing nature of this meal we will share together in light of those two realities.

In the old covenant the blood sacrifices served as a constant reminder of sin. In the new covenant the blood of Christ is represented in the cup and he asks us to do this as a constant reminder of his blood shed for us once for all.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26** *The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup>For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

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