

The Blessing of Christ's Blood

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[0 : 00] My heart and soul. Please be seated.

It's good to be with all of you this morning, this Lord's Day. If you would, please open up your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Ephesians. To the book of Ephesians, chapter 1.

We'll be reading verses 3 to 14. Now, this is a passage that we have been going through a number of times. When I've been preaching in the morning, I've been trying to take the next few verses of this passage.

This is one of my favorite passages. It's a passage of blessing. Where Paul begins his great epistle by a great prayer showing forth the blessings that we have in Jesus Christ.

What we've basically been doing as we've been going through this passage is counting our blessings. And I want you to do that because no matter where you are in the Christian life, no matter whether times are good or whether times are bad, it is good to have these blessings on the shelf ready to be picked up and ready to be admired and meditated on.

[1 : 10] Whether our lives are going horribly, whether our lives are doing well, it is always good to have a timeless, evergreen blessing from God to meditate upon, to direct our thoughts towards in order for us to praise Him and love Him no matter how dark the world may get.

Now, earlier we've talked about the blessing of election. We did that in verses 3 to 4, how God has predestined us from before the foundations of the earth. Then in verses 5 to 6, we talked about the blessing of adoption, how God has adopted us as His children in Jesus Christ.

We're able to approach Him as His children, not as just a judge or a master. And today, even though we're reading the entire passage, I want you to focus in on verses 7 to 8.

Verses 7 to 8, that's really going to be our core sermon text for today. And we're going to be looking at what I'm calling the blessing of Christ's blood. Now let's begin. Let us read this passage together. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[2 : 20] For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will, to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the one He loves.

In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace, which He lavished upon us.

With all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things, in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In Him, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of His glory.

[3 : 53] Amen. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever. Let us pray. O most gracious and loving Heavenly Father, Lord, we are thankful that we have the opportunity today to gather together as your people and to open up your word given to us.

Lord, we pray that you would use it upon our hearts, use it to strengthen us, to comfort us. We pray that you would work in us your spirit and conform us more and more into the image of Christ.

And may we leave here today proclaiming the great news of your gospel and the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ and His blood. Amen.

Now, blood is something that often makes us squeamish. No doubt some of you, when you have your blood drawn at the doctor's office, you begin to look anywhere else besides your arm.

You suddenly find those ceiling tiles tremendously fascinating. You begin trying to read those medical posters across the wall and you are interested in every word.

[5 : 04] Now, that's because when you see that blood coming out of your arm, it can be an instinctual thing. You can begin to panic a little bit. You can feel faint. You can even pass out, potentially. And if that's your reaction, that's a pretty normal reaction, actually.

There are even soldiers who cannot stand the sight of blood. Ulysses S. Grant, the head of the Union Army, later the President of the United States, he was a man who saw a great many very, very bloody battles.

But he saw them from a distance. And he actually became nauseous whenever he got near the battlefield. And whenever he was able to see that blood up close. Famously, he ordered all of his steaks well done.

Because his revulsion to blood was so deep that if there was the slightest hint of pink, he lost his appetite. Now, that's a rather extreme reaction. But there's something visceral about blood, isn't there?

It gets into our brains and causes an immediate reaction. But blood is also especially disconcerting for modern people. In our everyday lives, most of us never see it.

[6 : 13] Even though many of us probably eat meat, remarkably few of us have ever had to realize today. We know that shedding blood is necessary. But it's something that we don't like partaking in.

It's something we don't like to see on a deep, instinctual level. But the Bible talks a great deal about blood. You know, Leviticus goes into all sorts of nauseating detail about the blood of sacrifices.

How it is sprinkled, where it is sprinkled on, the instruments of worship, the altar upon the people, the Ark of the Covenant. Blood is everywhere in the Old Testament. You cannot escape it when you worshiped.

Everything was carefully designed to make you look at that blood and make you associate that blood with your salvation. You know, the calendar in ancient Israel was quite literally counting down the days till there would be a sacrifice for you and for your sins.

But blood is not only important for Old Testament saints to see. It is important for us to see and think about as well. In verses 7 to 8, there's a lot that we see there that we've received in Jesus Christ.

[7 : 25] In Him we have been redeemed. In Him we have been forgiven. And we have received grace. But at the center of all of it is Christ's blood. Paul places blood at the center.

We have been blessed with Christ's blood and because of that we receive everything else in those verses. And what I want to do today is I want us to look at what may make us uncomfortable.

What I'm calling the blessing of Christ's blood. I want us to see what it does for us. To see what it means to receive it. This is a sight that we as Christians, we're called not just to tolerate, not just to steal ourselves for as we look at it.

It's supposed to be our joy. It's supposed to be the theme of our song, just as it is the theme of Paul's prayer. And so as we're looking at the blood of Christ today, I want us to have three points as we go through this passage.

First, I want you to see that Christ's blood ransoms. Second, I want you to see that Christ's blood pardons. And the final thing I want you to see is that Christ's blood is gracious.

[8 : 31] Those are the three things I want you to see about Christ's blood. But the first thing I want you to see is that Christ's blood ransoms us. And we can see that in the first half of verse 7.

In him we have redemption through his blood. Now if we had a vocabulary list for Christian words, if you were trying to give this list to someone who's not from Christianity, is not from a church, and these are the words that you need in order to really understand what's happening inside a church, redemption would probably be in the top 10.

We use it a lot. It is an extremely important theological word. But there's a bit of a problem with redemption. It's that we use it so often that it can become a bit of a throwaway term.

We often use it and don't think about what precisely it means. But redemption is not just a fancy word for salvation you throw out there.

It is, at its core, it means deliverance. And here particularly, it means deliverance by ransom. And if your eyes are ever tempted to glaze over at the side of redemption, just substitute in the word for ransom.

[9 : 47] That's what's going to get you thinking in the right direction. You see, redemption is not just a \$10 spiritual word. It is, at its core, a financial word.

The idea of redemption is that payment is delivered for someone who has been enslaved or kidnapped. I want you to think about Somali pirates.

They're often in the news. They sail around the Somali coast. And their goal is not actually to loot your cargo. If they were able to get away scot-free with an entire ship filled with goods and no one knew that they had them, they wouldn't know how to sell them, really.

That's not their goal. Their goal is to capture you. To capture the various passengers and the crew. And then to ransom you back to your friends, your family, your government, trying to get money for you.

And if you send money to a Somali pirate trying to get someone freed, you are redeeming that person. And this idea of redemption and ransom is all over the Old Testament.

[10 : 53] And it is something that God does, particularly for the nation of Israel. The first use of redemption in your Bibles is Exodus 6.6.

When God promises, I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you. God redeems Israel from their slavery by buying them and bringing them out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, into the promised land where they can be free.

And when Paul here in Ephesians says that we have redemption, he means that Jesus himself ransoms us with his own blood.

You see, just as surely as the Israelites in Egypt, you too are born into slavery. You may not feel it, but spiritually speaking, there is a chain around your neck.

There is a bit between your teeth. Sin is what dominates our lives. It has mastery over us. Everything we do is tainted by it.

[12 : 07] Even our best works are tainted by sin. If you were judged by God for your best day, he would still find you wanting.

He would still find you to be a servant of sin. And indeed, we are so enslaved to sin that really we are addicted to it.

But we desire it. We cannot help but desire it. Just like drugs or alcohol, sin promises to give us pleasure and comfort.

But after that fleeting pleasure is gone, we discover the only thing left that sin pays us with is death. And yet, we just keep going back over and over and over again.

We keep on sinning. Sin has a grip on your very soul, so much so that your will is in bondage to it. And if you doubt that, just try to stop sinning.

[13 : 11] Just try it. You know, if you really try, I suspect you might be able to stop one or two bad habits. But what you'll find is that those habits just shift to a different habit.

You'll find sin still popping up in your life over here and over there. You still won't have true peace. If you really put your life under the microscope of God's law, you will still find yourself dominated by sin.

You may be able to make yourself a little bit more respectable. You may be able to make yourself a little bit more functional. But you're still a slave to sin at your very core.

But Jesus, he sees you in the midst of that slavery. He sees your misery and he sees the price tag. And what he does is he comes along and he doesn't open his wallet.

He opens up his veins. And he pours out his blood for you, redeeming you from sin and death. This is the greatest ransom payment in history.

[14 : 18] In 1192, Richard the Lionheart was captured while returning from the Third Crusade. He was captured by his rival, Duke Leopold of Austria.

And this Duke demanded a ransom from the Kingdom of England of 100,000 pounds of silver. And that ransom was paid.

It's literally worth billions of dollars and pounds today. And it crashed the entire English economy.

But as dramatic as that ransom of Richard the Lionheart was, you are ransomed with something far more valuable than gold or silver or mere money.

As it says in 1 Peter 1, 18-19, you were ransomed not with perishable things like gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish. Christians, we need to see that nothing on earth compares with Christ's blood. Its worth is quite literally infinite.

[15 : 28] Now, if you had a vial of his blood, and we were able by some miracle to have a vial of his blood here, it would look like the blood of any normal man. If you put it into a microscope, it would have a blood type.

It would look like ordinary blood. It would not be special for a blood transfusion. And yet, you would be able to look at it, and you would be able to see, if you had spiritual eyes, that it is of great worth. Because that is not just the blood of a man. It is not just the blood of a sinless man. That is the blood of the God-man. The eternal Son of God Himself. And that's why in Acts 20, it says that God redeems the church with His own blood.

The blood of God has been shed for us. Even though God, by nature, He does not have a body, He took on flesh in order to spill blood for you.

When Jesus dies upon the cross, He is paying our ransom. We know that we are redeemed. No matter how much sin may have a hold or claim on us, His blood is worth more than enough to free us from slavery.

[16 : 45] And once we see how valuable the blood of Jesus is, we will understand what Paul says elsewhere, that we were bought with a price. You have not been redeemed from slavery to continue sinning, and to continue to act like you are a slave of sin.

That life is beneath you. It's not what you're called to. Once you were in bondage to sin, once you were unable to escape its clutches, once your fight against sin was a spiritual game of whack-a-mole, hopeless, but now God has freed you, that you may live a new life of victory in Christ by His Spirit.

And if we live as Christians like we're still in bondage to sin, then we don't understand the full price that was paid for us. We don't understand the sheer cosmic magnitude of the love that was displayed.

In that while we were sinners, and while there was nothing in us that was desirable, our Savior redeemed us by His blood and bought us for Himself.

One of Paul's favorite ways of introducing himself in his letters is not by saying that he is an apostle. Sometimes he likes to just say, I am a slave of Jesus Christ.

[18 : 09] And on its face, you can think of a few ways that are really more shameful and degrading to introduce yourself. But Paul says this proudly because he knows the price that was paid for him and because he knows the glory of his master.

Slavery to Christ is unlike any other slavery that ever has existed or ever will exist. You see, the yoke of Jesus is easy. His burden is light.

He will not break a bruised reed. And the sign of this is that Jesus is the only master in all of history who not only willingly but joyfully died for his slaves.

He made sure that He's not going to use you or abuse you. And He bought you in order to say to you, I will be your God and you will be my people.

And once you see that price that was paid for you, you will learn how serving your new master is not a legal obligation but an act of love.

[19 : 18] Because He first loved us with the most valuable display of love imaginable. But the second thing I want you to see is that Paul says is not just that Christ's blood ransoms us but it does something else, that it pardons us.

That's our second point. And you can see that in the next phrase in verse 7. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul adds in that extra phrase to fill out what the blood of Jesus does and what our redemption looks like. Alongside this financial image of ransom, he puts a legal image.

The legal image of pardon. And he does that because the salvation that we have in Christ's death cannot be simplified down to one or the other. We have a multifaceted salvation.

And that's because we have a multifaceted problem in sin. You see, sin is not just something that we suffer under. It isn't just a taskmaster that we need to be freed from.

[20 : 27] It's not just an external problem. It is an internal problem as well. Sin is something that we ourselves have committed that we are guilty of before God.

It's not just enough for us to be delivered from the power of sin and no longer live under its tyranny. We need to be forgiven of our sins so that we are able to stand before God with a clean conscience. And the Bible says that to be truly forgiven, to be truly clean before God, what we need is a sacrifice. That's one of the main points about the entirety of the Old Testament worship system. There are constant sacrifices that you had to repeat over and over and over again. And that blood is constantly being shed for you and for the rest of the nation.

So much so that in Hebrews 9.22, as we read, it says, Indeed, under the law, almost everything was purified with blood. And without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

[21 : 37] And each time that blood was shed, each ancient Israelite was supposed to be reminded, I am a sinner. I am a sinner. I am the one who is supposed to be on that altar.

My blood is the one that is supposed to be shed. And that sacrifice is taking my place. It is enduring the punishment that I deserve. But just a few short verses later in Hebrews, in Hebrews 10.4, it mentions that there's an issue with this entire Old Testament system.

And it's actually a pretty massive problem. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. All of that blood that was spilled in the Old Testament was on one level absolutely useless.

It was powerless blood. It never forgave sins. Now, obviously, they needed to still make those sacrifices.

God told them to make those sacrifices. But why? Why did God make Israel go to all that trouble? Why did God have Moses write the entire book of Leviticus at all?

[22 : 53] Why? Well, it's because God wanted to train Israel. He wanted to prepare them. He wanted to prepare them to appreciate the true sacrifice that was coming, that would truly forgive sins.

It was to prepare them to understand Hebrews 10.19, where it says that we can enter into heaven with confidence. Why? Because of the blood of Jesus.

That blood was shed for us. All the blood of bulls and goats were preparation to see this blood. To see the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And the sign for us of the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice is that he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Our high priest sat down because no more sacrifices are necessary.

Not one of your sins can ever make Jesus rise again. He has been sitting for almost 2,000 years, and he will continue to sit until he comes again to meet us.

[24 : 04] And his divine blood is even now in heaven crying out eternally a better word than the blood of Abel. It is not crying out justice.

It is crying out mercy. It is crying out pardon and forgive them. And as a Christian, when you look at the blood of Christ, what you need to feel most of all is an incredible sense of assurance.

No better salvation exists. No better salvation is even possible. When you stand before the throne of God, you were redeemed by and washed in the blood of the Lamb.

You know that your sins are dealt with once for all. And if you ever start to doubt that, if you ever start to think, my sins are unforgivable, what you need to do is you need to look at the blood of Jesus.

You need to realize that it was shed for you. Realize that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, died in your place on the cross. And you need to remember the words of that hymn, my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[25 : 18] That blood is even now sprinkled on the mercy seat of the heavenly temple. That blood is an eternal testimony of your redemption. No other blood, not one of your sins can close the doors of heaven because Jesus, your high priest, has opened them wide.

You are always welcome to come in with the people of God, to come before your Father, and to kneel and worship. And the wonder you should feel at the blood of Jesus, that is what you need because that will banish your doubts.

It will crowd the mount, and it will make you draw nearer to your Savior and God. Now what we really need to see when we see the blood of Jesus is our third point.

We need to see not just that it ransoms, not just that it pardons. We need to see that the blood of Jesus is gracious. Look with me at the next few bits of these verses.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished upon us. Now this is really the goal of every single blessing

in this entire prayer.

[26 : 32] The goal of Paul in this prayer is not just for you to be able to say, look at how great my condition is. Look at how much I am worth. Look at how great my spiritual condition is.

Now that is something he wants you to see, but it's only part of it. What he really wants you to see is after the greatness of your salvation to realize the wonders of God's grace.

We're supposed to look in astonishment at God and His grace. What we have here in these verses is a two-fold salvation, a picture of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and it is a picture painted with Jesus' blood.

And we're called to look at that and wonder at God's grace. That is a picture that is beyond our comprehension. I want you to notice that it says here that it is in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

It is not merely from God's grace. It is in accordance with God's grace. Now what difference does that make? Well if I can borrow an illustration from one commentator, John D. Rockefeller was an incredibly rich man.

[27 : 48] He lived over a hundred years ago. He was a rich oil baron. He was worth literally billions upon billions. He was until very recently considered the richest man who had ever lived.

And one of the most famous pictures of Rockefeller is where he is all dressed up and he's handing a dime to a small child. Now what we can say about that, we can say in that picture that John D. Rockefeller is being generous.

But he is only giving from his riches. He is not giving according to them. Actually from one perspective, that act of generosity is the least generous act that has ever occurred in human history.

It cost more for him to reach his hand into his pocket than for him to give out that dime to that small child. In order for him to give in accordance with his riches, he would have to give an unimaginable amount of wealth.

But God gives us redemption and he gives us forgiveness by the blood of Jesus according to the riches of his grace. And the true wonder of that statement is once you realize that God's riches of grace are quite literally infinite.

[29 : 06] And yet, what we have still received is in accordance with them. Now as Paul says in verse 3, we have been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

We have been given it all. He has held nothing back from us. He is not pinching pennies with you. He is giving you it all. And he has even given you the blood of his own son.

Now these riches are simply lavished upon us. It is out of the overflow of his riches that he gives you his own son's blood. Christ pays for everything and he continues to pay out of his bottomless wealth.

He's giving without care or concern. He simply gives and gives and gives and yet he is still as rich as he was before. You know, Christians, we need to be stunned at the reality of God's grace.

We need to realize that it has nothing to do with us at all. God simply blesses. We do not merit it. Nothing we do deserves it.

[30 : 15] As Jonathan Edwards so famously put it, the only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary. And the deeper we peer into the wonders of God's grace, the miracle that God shed his own blood for us, the more we need to become absolutely convinced that Christ's work upon the cross is sufficient.

Christ's sacrifice was not just 90% effective or 99% effective. It was completely effective because the grace that we have been given is literally limitless.

The grace of God is simply lavished upon us beyond our wildest dreams, beyond our greatest thought or our greatest desire. We are given it all in Jesus Christ.

But as we close, there's one final thing that I want you to see about Christ's grace. It's going to be a little confusing because some of your translations are going to know what I'm saying. Others of you aren't.

The last phrase of verse 8 where it says that it was lavished upon us with all wisdom and insight, I think the period comes after that phrase.

[31 : 28] Some Bible translations put it before, some put it after, but I think the way that it should be is that we are lavished with God's grace in all wisdom and insight.

And what that means is that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of Christ's blood that has been shed for you, that is wise.

That is a display of God's wisdom, of His knowledge, of His power. And isn't that really strange when you actually think about it, of Christ's sacrifice being wise?

You know, when you see Jesus dying upon the cross, when you see how He is mocked, how He is beaten, how He is scorned, the natural reaction is to view that as shameful, to view that as foolish, not as wise.

Have you ever actually seen the first picture of the crucifixion ever in history? It is not by a Christian. It is actually by a pagan making fun of Christianity.

[32 : 43] It is graffiti in Rome, basically toilet graffiti, where there is a stick figure on a cross, and that stick figure, head is replaced with the head of a donkey.

And underneath is the inscription, Alexa Minos worships his God. Someone has come along, and they're making fun of Alexa Minos for worshipping Jesus.

Because he died upon a cross. That may shock some people in the church, because we think about the cross as something great, but really, that's the most natural reaction in the world.

The Romans thought that that was the most undignified death imaginable. It was foolishness to think that salvation could come by that. But God chose to use something shameful to shame the wise.

In 1 Corinthians 1, 22 to 24, it says this, For Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

[33 : 52] For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. We need to be careful to make sure that we are not ashamed of the blood of Jesus and that we are not ashamed of the cross.

One of my professors in seminary, he said that one of the signs a church is losing its power is when it stops to talk. It begins to talk less about the blood of Jesus.

Some churches will talk about how wonderful Jesus is. They will talk about how loving he is, but they'll never talk about his blood, how his blood has been shed for us. That's something that can seem primitive.

It can seem foolish to many people today, but God delights in using foolish, shameful things to show forth his wisdom and his power, and we need to have eyes to see that wisdom.

But if you are not a Christian, if you have come here and you are searching for peace, if you are searching for comfort for your soul and you don't know where to find it, look at Jesus' blood.

[35 : 03] Look at something shameful. You will find in that blood matchless riches, matchless grace. You will find sufficiency for every part of your life.

You will find redemption from sin, forgiveness of your sins. You will find peace for your soul. But you must come to an end of yourself. The answer is out there, but it is in, not in the world, but in Jesus Christ.

And once you see it, you will sing Christ's praises just as Paul does in this passage. Let us pray.

Most gracious and loving Heavenly Father, Lord, we are thankful for the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.