Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/22/2026 Brad Brandt

Hebrews 9:16-28 "Nothing But the Blood" part one**

Series: *"Going Deeper into The Son – An Exposition of Hebrews 7-9"*[1]

Main Idea: Hebrews 9:16-28 makes it clear that in God's plan a bloody sacrifice is necessary. We see the bloody sacrifice emphasized in two ways.

I. When God established the first covenant, He required a bloody sacrifice (16-22).
   A. Blood was necessary to initiate the covenant (16-18).
      1. In order for a will to go into effect, there must be a death.
      2. The shedding of blood verified that death.
   B. Blood was necessary to confirm the covenant (19-21).
      1. The scroll and the people were sprinkled with blood.
      2. The tabernacle and its utensils were sprinkled with blood.
      3. Every time the people saw those stains, they were reminded that something had to die so they could be right with God.
   C. Blood was necessary to provide forgiveness (22).
      1. The remedy wasn't the blood itself.
      2. The remedy was the fact that a substitute had died for the sinner.

II. When God established the new covenant, He required the ultimate bloody sacrifice (23-28).
   A. What happened on earth teaches us about heavenly things (23).
   B. What happened in heaven teaches us that Christ's sacrifice is final (24-28).
      1. Christ entered heaven for us.
      2. Christ's sacrifice guarantees that we can be in heaven with Him.

Make It Personal: When we think about the blood of Christ…
1. We ought to be humbled.
2. We ought to be grateful.
3. We ought to be challenged.

I began last week's message with a question I'd like to revisit as we begin today. Here's the question. *Are you clean?* Not physical cleanness. Is your *soul* clean? Do you see yourself as clean in God's eyes? And if so, why? Know this. We will not serve God as we ought if we do not realize that we (once unclean) are now clean. And we won't serve Christ as He deserves if we don't realize that He is the One who made us clean. And His shed blood alone is the reason.

There is a connection between *cleansing* and *serving*. Do we serve in order to be cleansed? Many think so. They depend upon what they do to make themselves clean in the eyes of a holy God. No. That's the approach of religion. This is the approach of biblical Christianity. We are clean and the blood of Christ is the sole reason we are clean and therefore we serve. This is the message of Hebrews.

As I read today's text, listen carefully for the repeated mention of the word "blood". The writer uses the term *blood* eleven times in the second half of Hebrews 9.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 9:15-28

Have you been washed in the blood? Now there's a question that will generate discussion amongst civilized twenty-first century folks. Think about it. Ask your unsaved neighbors what they think about these lyrics, taken from Elisha Hoffman's gospel hymn:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

That doesn't make sense to the natural mind. Typically, blood is something we wash away, not wash *in*. For instance, one time Sherry noticed a trace of blood on our carpet,

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**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] For a previous look at this passage, see the Hebrews series preached at WBC in 2008.

apparently from a cut on our dog's paw. Out came the peroxide to wash *away* the blood from the carpet fibers. But we sing about, we cherish, being washed *in* the blood.

Of course, not everyone does. Many today preach a bloodless Christianity. They resist what they call a "slaughterhouse religion" and the preaching of a "gospel of gore." Some denominations have removed from their hymnbooks songs that refer to the blood of Jesus, so as not to fill the minds of modern mankind with offensive images.[2]

While some oppose the blood, others misrepresent the blood of Christ with various, extra-biblical notions. James Fowler gives a sampling in his article, "The Blood of Christ." Some teach that, "God has a heavenly 'blood-bank' of Jesus' blood, and that when a person becomes a Christian his soul is actually and materially "covered" by the liquid blood of Jesus… Others speak of a vat of Jesus' blood into which Christians are allegedly baptized, a 'blood-bath,' or a fount of Jesus' blood from which we are sprinkled."[3]

Think about the statement that's made from time to time about "pleading the blood." Fowler writes, "This is a popular phrase within some Christian circles:

They "plead the blood" to relieve fears and depression.
They "plead the blood" to cast out demons.
They "plead the blood" to remove a curse.
They "plead the blood" to heal and work miracles.
They "plead the blood" to get what they call the "baptism in the Spirit" and to speak in tongues.
They "plead the blood" to be delivered from difficult circumstances, and to keep them from all accidents.
They "plead the blood" to protect their home and family.
They "plead the blood" for revival, for intercessory prayer and for worship."[4]

Their reasoning goes like this, says Fowler, "Since the life of Jesus is in His Blood, if we plead, honor, sprinkle and sing about it, we actually introduce the life of God into our worship. We sprinkle the Blood with our tongues, by repeating the word, "Blood, Blood, Blood of Jesus." The more we plead the blood the more power we have, power to conquer the world for Jesus, power to clean up the church, power against satan, as we use the blood as a weapon of spiritual warfare, which fights sinful infection like our white blood cells fight infection in our physical body."[5]

Please don't misunderstand. I believe in the necessity of the shed blood of Christ. But I also believe that one of the prime ways we can diminish the significance of Christ's precious blood is to infuse non-biblically based notions into our thinking. The only way we can know the God-honoring truth about any subject is to affirm no less than and no more than what God's own Word says about it.

The question is, what does the Bible teach about the blood? To answer, let's turn our attention to the latter half of Hebrews 9. In a sentence, here's what we find. Hebrews 9:16-28 makes it clear that in God's plan *a bloody sacrifice is necessary if sinners are to be right with Him.* But why? What made a bloody sacrifice necessary in the first place, and what is it about Christ's bloody sacrifice that reconciles sinners to God? The Lord willing, we'll take two weeks to work through our text and address those vital questions.

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[2] For a helpful summary, see an article by James Fowler, "The Blood of Christ," http://www.christinyou.net/pages/bloodchrst.html.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

In Hebrews 9:16-28, we see the bloody sacrifice emphasized in two ways. We'll focus primarily on the first way this morning.

I. When God established the first covenant, He required a bloody sacrifice (16-22).

As we've emphasized repeatedly in our previous studies, the book of Hebrews was written to encourage a group of first century Jewish followers of Jesus. It's a motivational book intended to spur on these believers in the face of persecution, to urge them to persevere in their faith. Christ is worth it! is the predominant theme of the letter. Christ deserves our allegiance because He is superior to all other authorities, whether angels, or Moses, or the Aaronic priests. That's the message of chapters 1-7.

Then in chapters 8-10, we learn that Christ's sacrificial work is superior to any other sacrifice. To appreciate Christ's work, the writer keeps taking us back into the *Old* Testament, to the *old* "covenant" days.

I don't think most of us appreciate how difficult the transition was to the new covenant. The old covenant had been in place for over 1,400 years. Think of it. If you wanted your sins forgiven, you went to a tabernacle and later a temple in the city of Jerusalem. And you brought an animal. And you took it to a priest. And he offered it for you. This is what your parents did, and grandparents, and great-grandparents, going back fourteen centuries.

To put that in perspective, going back fourteen centuries takes us to 626 AD. The center of the Christian world was Constantinople. Islam wasn't even a religion yet (Mohammad died in 632 AD at the age of 62). Constantinople was the hub of the Christian world until it fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 AD.

1,400 years is a long time! That's how long the old covenant was in place. And what do we find in the old covenant? To put it bluntly, a lot of bloody sacrifices. But why? What did blood have to do with the first covenant? The writer points out three connections in verses 16-22.

A. Blood was necessary to initiate the covenant (16-18). Notice verses 16-18, "For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. [17] For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. [18] Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood."[6]

William Barclay comments, "This is one of the most difficult passages in the whole letter, although it would not be difficult to those who read the letter for the first time, for its methods of argument and expression and categories of thought would be familiar to them."[7]

The problem has to do with the translation of the Greek word *diatheke*, as Barclay observes. "Up to verse 16 the writer to the Hebrews has been using *diatheke* in the normal Christian sense of *covenant*; then, suddenly and without warning or explanation, he switches to the sense of *will*."[8]

Look again at the text which reads (NIV), "In the case of a will (*diatheke*), it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will (*diatheke*) is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. This is why even the first covenant (*diatheke*; although the word is implied and not in the

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[6] Here's the NIV84, "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. This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood."

[7] William Barclay, p. 106.

[8] Barclay, p. 107.

text) was not put into effect without blood."

Leon Morris explains, "The argument is not easy to follow in English because we have no single word that is the precise equivalent of *diatheke*."[9] The writer is proving a point that was difficult for first century Jews to swallow. He just told them back in 8:13 that the old covenant was done and obsolete, replaced by the new covenant. That meant that religious ceremonies observed for fourteen centuries were no longer necessary now that Christ had come. Christ initiated a *new covenant*, says 9:15, and those called will receive God's eternal inheritance.

Years ago, when Sherry and I were first married, we made a will. We've yet to use it, of course, because a will is a legal document that clarifies what is to happen in the event of death. That's the writer's point in verses 16-17.

In order for a will to go into effect, there must be a death. As long as a person is alive, he can still change his will. But once he dies, the will is fixed and cannot be amended. At that point his will is in "force" (that's the term the writer uses in verse 17; Greek *bebaia*), a term emphasizing that it is certain and unchangeable.

On the heels of that illustration, the writer makes this point in verse 18 (NIV). "This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood." See the connection? In order for a will to go into effect, there must be a death. When the first covenant was initiated, there was a death. How do we know?

The shedding of blood verified that death. Whose blood and whose death? The blood and death of animals. That bloodshed verified that death had occurred. So blood was necessary to initiate the first covenant. Yet there's more.

B. Blood was necessary to confirm the covenant (19-21). Notice verses 19-21, "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, [20] saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.' [21] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship."

It all happened at Mount Sinai. That's where God established the first covenant (also called the Mosaic covenant). The Lord delivered His law to Moses, and Moses repeated the divine law to all the people. But Moses did something else and it involved the blood of slain bulls.

The scroll and the people were sprinkled with blood. And not just with blood, but as Hebrews says, it was blood mixed together with water, scarlet wool, and branches of hyssop. Hughes explains, "The hyssop…was apparently tied with the scarlet wool to a cedarwood stick, thus forming a sprinkling implement which was dipped in the blood diluted with water."[10]

I should mention that when you read the account in Exodus 24, you'll find no mention of the sacrifice of calves and goats, only of oxen. Neither is there mention of the ceremonial use of water, scarlet wool, and hyssop. Just blood. Nor does the Exodus narrative say anything about sprinkling the scroll with blood, only the people. Apparently, the writer of Hebrews picked up these details from some extra-biblical source. Yet as Leon Morris concludes, "While we do not know where this information came from, there is nothing improbable about any of it."[11]

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[9] Leon Morris, p. 88.
[10] Hughes, pp. 375-6.
[11] Leon Morris, p. 89.

Yet there's more. According to Hebrews, it wasn't just the scroll and the people. *The tabernacle and its utensils were sprinkled with blood.*

And all this raises an important question. Why did Moses sprinkle the scroll containing the words of God, the people, the tabernacle, and all the utensils used in the tabernacle *with blood*? Let's answer that question with another question. What does blood do when it touches something? It stains it, right? Think of the collar on your shirt men when you nick the skin on your neck while shaving.

When we get blood on something, it's a bad thing. Right? But wait. Moses intentionally stained the book, the people and their clothing, even the sanctuary and everything used in it *with blood*. Why?

Think about it. *Every time God's people saw those stains, they were reminded that something drastic had to happen so they could be right with their God.* Something had to *die*. Why would that be? Because God says that the wages of sin is *death*. Yet in His mercy, the Lord devised a plan whereby a substitute could die, in this case, calves. Because the calves died, sinners could live, and not just live but live in a right relationship with Him.

This brings us to the third connection between blood and the first covenant. Not only was blood necessary to initiate the covenant and confirm the covenant, but also to *provide forgiveness*.

C. Blood was necessary to provide forgiveness (22). Verse 22 says, "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

When I graduated from high school I thought was going to be a medical doctor. And so I headed off to college and began a pre-med degree. But then I realized something quite significant. I didn't like the sight of blood. I almost fainted one time when I saw blood. So I changed my major and took an alternative path.

Friends, there was no alternative path for the squeamish in the old covenant. Under the Mosaic law, blood wasn't optional. In order for something to be cleansed, the law said that blood was required. God Himself explained why in Leviticus 17:11, "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 for one's life."

You'll notice our text (verse 22) says "almost everything" (NIV "nearly everything") because there were some exceptional, non-bloody sacrifices. For instance, if a person was too poor to bring an animal he could bring an offering of fine flour and this would suffice as a sin offering to make atonement for his sins (Lev. 5:11-13). But in almost all other cases, God's law required the shedding of blood.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Because God is just, He cannot excuse sin. Forgive it, yes, but never excuse it. It would be a violation of His holiness to overlook sin. He must demonstrate His just wrath towards every act of rebellion against Him and His law.

How then can He deal justly with sin *and* pardon a sinner? The Spirit of God gives the answer in our text. He says that apart from the shedding of blood, He can't. Again, *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* No cancelling of debt. No reconciliation possible.

My friend, it is costly to forgive. You know that firsthand if you've been severely wronged by someone. As Barclay explains, "A son or a daughter may go wrong and a father or a mother may forgive; but that forgiveness brings tears, whiteness to the hair,

lines to the face, a cutting anguish and then a long dull ache to the heart. It does not cost nothing."[12]

While that may be poor grammar, it is the truth. Forgiveness does not cost nothing. Forgiveness, even on a human level, is very costly. How much more so is God's forgiveness! It requires the *shedding of blood*.

What does that mean? The phrase "shedding of blood" actually comes from one Greek word, *haimatekchusias*, which literally refers to "the pouring out of blood." A trickle of blood? An animal can survive that. But when an animal's blood is *poured out*, it signifies death for the animal. The same goes for a person. You can't live without your blood. To say that your blood is poured out is to say that your death is certain.

Remember Jesus' words at the last supper? He said in Matthew 26:28, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is *poured out* for many for the forgiveness of sins."[13] And the disciples knew what He meant. He just said He was going to die for them.

Please don't miss this. Under the old covenant, *the remedy for sin wasn't the blood itself.* Rather, *the remedy for sin was the fact that a substitute had died for the sinner.* Again, God's Word doesn't say that *without blood* there's no forgiveness. It says *without the shedding of blood*. It wasn't the blood per se that brought forgiveness which is why the priest didn't merely take an animal, cut his leg, get a few drops of blood, and sprinkle it on the altar. Mere blood wouldn't suffice. The shedding of blood was the requirement, that is, the sacrificial death of a substitute creature.[14]

Please listen carefully. It's not merely the blood of Christ that brings us forgiveness, which is why we don't worship the blood. It's the fact that He *shed* His blood. He *poured out* His blood, meaning simply that He died for us, as our substitute, in our place, for our sin, for our forgiveness.

This is vital to see, my friend. The remedy for our sin problem isn't simply blood, even Jesus' blood. There was nothing magical about Jesus' blood, which is why if Jesus had cut His finger in the woodshop in Nazareth, merely touching that blood wouldn't bring a sinner forgiveness. What made that blood precious and life-giving was the fact that Jesus willingly poured it out in His death as our substitute on the cross.

Raymond Brown makes the observation that there are far more references to the "blood" of Christ in the New Testament than to the "cross" or "death" of Christ. The "blood of Christ," says Brown, is "an unmistakable reference to the sacrificial death of Christ." [15]

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. But *with the shedding of blood*, there is! Ponder with me what this means. The Greek term translated "forgiveness" in verse 22 (KJV 'remission') literally means "to send away from." And that's exactly what God does. As Gromacki explains, "When God forgives a sinner, He sends away from that person the latter's sins, including the thoughts, acts, penalties, and guilt."[16]

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[12] Barclay, p. 108.

[13] *Young's Literal Translation*— "This is my blood of the new covenant, that for many is being poured out—to remission of sins."

[14] Wiersbe explains, "The blood sprinkled on a piece of furniture did not change the nature of that piece, *but it changed God's relationship to it.* God could enter into communion with people because of the sprinkled blood." Wiersbe, p. 311.

[15] Raymond Brown, p. 165.

[16] Robert Gromacki, p. 156.

My friend, if you've trusted in Christ and His sacrificial death for you, God has *sent your sins away* and you bear them no more. And you bear them no more because Christ shed His blood for them. Gone! Forgiven!

Don't take my word for it. Hear the testimony of Scripture itself. Peter says in **1 Peter 1:18-19**, "For 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." John says in **1 John 1:7**, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and *the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin*." John says in **Revelation 1:5**, "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins *by his blood*."

It's not coincidental that some of our most cherished songs of the faith reflect on the shed blood of our Savior. Consider these words by William Cowper.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains:
Lose all their guilty stains,
Lose all their guilty stains;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Now listen to Robert Lowry as he asks and then answers his own question.

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

This brings us to our second point. We've seen that when God established the first covenant, He required a bloody sacrifice. So too in the new covenant.

II. When God established the new covenant, He required the ultimate bloody sacrifice (23-28).

Listen to verse 23, "Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Did you catch that? Notice the writer's comparison.

A. What happened on earth teaches us about heavenly things (23). That tabernacle, those utensils, those bloody sacrifices, they earthly realities were all *copies* of the heavenly realities (see 8:5). And as we've just seen, those copies had to be purified with bloody sacrifices.

Now we're told, *so did the heavenly things*. The heavenly things themselves needed to be purified, too, and with better sacrifices. The question is *why*. Why was purification necessary for the "heavenly things"? To answer that question we must remember something. Remember who used to be in heaven and what happened there.

The first sin in the universe took place when a beautiful angelic being named Lucifer became dissatisfied with his position and challenged God. We read about his prideful rebellion in Isaiah 14:12-14, "How you have fallen *from heaven*, O morning star, son of

the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"

Listen to Ezekiel 28:14–15, "You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. [15] You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you."

Hear Jesus' words in Luke 10:18, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

That first sin happened where? In heaven. As Gromacki points out, "Heaven thus became tainted by that original sin. Since that time, fallen angels have continued to have access to the presence of God (Job 1:6; Rev. 12:10)."[17] Ephesians 6:12 refers to "spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms." Colossians 1:20 indicates that Christ's atoning work on the cross affected things in heaven, declaring, "And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

With this in mind, listen again to verse 23. "Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." What happened on earth teaches us about heavenly things. But there's more. The writer takes it a step further.

B. What happened in heaven teaches us that Christ's sacrifice is final (24-28). The Lord willing, we'll explore this more carefully next time, as we unpack verses 24-28. But for now, allow me to give at least a sampling of what's in store.

Listen to verse 24, "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." The writer wants us to reflect on two amazing accomplishments, and here's the first. *Christ entered heaven for us.* He didn't just return to heaven. He now appears *for us* in heaven.

Leon Morris explains, "Heaven itself is regarded as the true sanctuary, not some structure within it to which the earthly tabernacle corresponded."[18] That is precisely where our Savior is right now, beloved. He is in the true sanctuary and He is there *for us*.

Those may well be the two most important words in the Bible. They are the Greek words *huper heymon*. In English, *for us*. We find those breathtaking words again and again on the pages of Scripture. We are told that…

-Christ became *for us* wisdom from God (1 Cor. 1:30).

-God demonstrated His love *for us* in this, that Christ died *for us* (Rom. 5:8).

-God made Him who knew no sin to be sin *for us* (2 Cor. 5:21).

-Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse *for us* (Gal. 3:13).

-Christ loved us and gave Himself up *for us* (Eph. 5:2; Tit. 2:14).

-Christ laid down His life *for us* (1 John 3:16).

For us! He did all this for us! And the writer of Hebrews adds one more to the list. Christ has entered heaven *for us*. I think sometimes we fail to appreciate the significance of Christ's ascension. We read the angel's words in Acts 1:11, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into

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[17] Gromacki, p. 157.

[18] Leon Morris, p. 92.

heaven," and think, "Jesus has returned to His rightful glorious home in heaven!" But He didn't just return home to heaven. He returned home to do something *for us.*

That brings us to a second amazing activity. Notice again the writer's words. The NIV says, "Now to appear *for us in God's presence*." Again, for us. The ESV says, "But into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God *on our behalf*." *Huper heymon.* As sinners we cannot enter the presence of a holy and perfect God. Yet Christ is there FOR US. Even now He is appearing in His Father's presence in our behalf.

I am not sure that any writer outside of the Bible has captured this staggering truth more vividly than Charitie Lees Smith Bancroft. Charitie was the daughter of an Irish pastor near Dublin and she penned these words in 1863 which eventually appeared in Charles Spurgeon's hymnbook.

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea:
A great High Priest whose name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands,
My name is written on his heart.
I know that while in Heav'n he stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart,
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see him there,
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free,
For God the just is satisfied
To look on him and pardon me,
To look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb,
My perfect, spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace.
One with himself I cannot die;
My soul is purchased by his blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God,
With Christ, my Savior and my God.

O my friend, *Christ's sacrifice guarantees that we can be in heaven with Him.* That's the reason for His bloody sacrifice. It took care of our sin problem, and for those who have repented and trusted in Christ, it guarantees a place in heaven with Him. That's why at this church we're not ashamed of the blood, and God forbid we ever would be. But it's time to make it personal.

<u>Make It Personal: When we think about the blood of Christ…three things ought to happen.</u>

1. We ought to be humbled. There's no room for pride in the family of God, for we who are in the family of God have all entered it the same way. What you brought to God was the same thing I brought to God. It certainly wasn't our goodness for we had none in His sight. We brought our sin. That's all we had to offer to Him. Yet what He brought to us was beloved His Son, and what His Son poured out for us what nothing short of His life-giving blood.

How can we who claim to love the One who shed His blood for us give the silent treatment to others for whom He shed that same blood? How can we avoid or ignore, let alone look down on, another person for whom Christ died?

Philip Hughes offers this reflection, "The wonder and the mystery of divine grace is this, that the deathless Son of God should become the mortal Son of man, so that, though still eternally sovereign as God, as man he might die for mankind and, rising from the grave, unite mankind with himself in the enjoyment of his everlasting inheritance."[19]

When we think about our Savior, and especially when we think about the blood of our Savior, we ought to be *humbled*.

2. We ought to be grateful. Think about this observation by John Calvin, "The majesty of God is rightly fearful for us and the way to it is a dangerous labyrinth until we know that He is appeased by the blood of Christ and until that same blood affords us an easy approach. All worship is faulty and impure unless Christ cleanses it by the sprinkling of His blood."[20]

There's a great scene in the book of Revelation that depicts a coming day. We read in Revelation 7:13-14, "Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?' I answered, 'Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb*.'"

It's the shed blood of the Lamb that makes a sinner clean in God's sight, and if we've experienced the cleansing power of Christ's death, we ought to be not only humble, but *grateful*. Are you thankful for what Christ endured on the cross? Are you showing Him? It starts by receiving Him as your Savior, by saying, "Thank You, Lord, for dying for my sins and in my place!" And that's just the beginning. We ought to express our gratitude to Jesus for His shed blood every day.

I urge you in your personal, daily time with God to memorize and meditate on verses about the blood, and sing songs about the blood. That's not just an academic exercise. It's a way to cultivate a thankful heart for Christ and His cross-work.

One more. When we think about the blood of Christ, we ought to be humbled, and we ought to be grateful. Finally, we ought to be *challenged.*

3. We ought to be challenged. In 1858 Frances Havergal wrote her first hymn. She had just seen a painting of the suffering Jesus with a caption that read, "This have I done for thee; what has thou done for Me?" She was so moved that she wrote a poem on a scrap piece of paper. When she read her own words, she thought so little of them that she tossed them in the fire, but they fell out untouched. Some time later she showed them to her father, and he encouraged her to preserve them, and even wrote a tune for them. Here's what she wrote.

I gave My life for thee, My precious blood I shed,
That thou might ransomed be, and raised up from the dead

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[19] Philip Hughes, pp. 370-1.

[20] John Calvin, p. 125.

I gave, I gave My life for thee, what hast thou given for Me?
I gave, I gave My life for thee, what hast thou given for Me?

My Father's house of light, My glory circled throne
I left for earthly night, for wanderings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?
I left, I left it all for thee, hast thou left aught for Me?

I suffered much for thee, more than thy tongue can tell,
Of bitterest agony, to rescue thee from hell.
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee, what hast thou borne for Me?
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee, what hast thou borne for Me?

And I have brought to thee, down from My home above,
Salvation full and free, My pardon and My love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee, what hast thou brought to Me?
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee, what hast thou brought to Me?

Beloved, He gave His all for us. Let's now give our all to Him.

Closing Song: #196 *"There Is a Fountain"* (all five verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. In our community group discussion last week, we observed that the subject of blood is central to Christianity. We see blood in the Bible in many places. We also see blood mentioned in many of our hymns. Take a few moments to find some hymns that mention Christ's blood (use your smart phones if needed) and then read the lyrics (perhaps sing the chorus together).

2. After pondering these songs about Christ's blood, take time to read today's text, Hebrews 9:15-28 (we'll be taking two weeks to work through this passage). In verse 18 the writer mentions that blood was used to "inaugurate the first covenant". What does he mean by "the first covenant"?

3. How does he say that blood was used in verses 19-20? How does he say that blood was used in verse 21?

4. According to verse 22, what's the connection between the "shedding of blood" and "the forgiveness of sins"? What does the term "shedding" indicate and why is it significant?

5. What do we learn about the new covenant in verse 23 (see also verse 24)? How is the shedding of blood significant in the new covenant?

6. What practical difference should the truths we've discussed today make on our lives this week? After discussing, allow these truths to shape your prayer time as a group. Have different people lead in prayers of praise and petition in light of the blood of Christ.