

all bloodied up

hebrews 9

Find your way over to Hebrews chapter 9 this morning. We get a lot of talk about the tabernacle and the rituals of purification here. Remember, for a Hebrew who had become a Christian, there were some significant hurdles they'd have to get past with this theology of a new covenant. And since Hebrews were the primary audience, the author spends a lot of time developing and expanding the defense of the new dispensation that Christ's death had ushered in.

What we're going to focus on this morning is blood. That's a major topic in the chapter. And, really, if you go through the whole Bible, blood holds a prominent place for God's people because of what it typifies and represents. Starting in the Garden of Eden, all the way through the simple restrictions that were laid out by the Jerusalem council, then to some of the images we see in Heaven in the Revelation, there is significance in blood.

We see some of that significance in our text, so let's take a look at it and see what we see.

Hebrews 9.1-28 - Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of

the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another — He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

The power of blood is not only a physical reality, it is a spiritual one too. We sing songs about the power of Christ's blood. Here in our text we're told that it is blood that brings us remission of sins. It is blood that cleanses our consciences. It is blood that enables us to serve the living God. It is blood that brings us a new covenant in Christ Jesus. It is blood that purifies and sanctifies.

We're given a back and forth comparison between Jesus' blood shed on the cross and the blood of animals that was used for sacrifices and the consecration of the Tabernacle under Moses. And if we think about that and start seeing the types in Leviticus and the rest of the Law, it is interesting to see the role of blood in the work of God in His people.

In Leviticus 17.14 we read that blood sustains life. And as we see Christ talking about His blood and the role that it plays in our lives, we find that it sustains us and empowers us spiritually. There in Revelation 12 verse 11 we read that believers overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb.

So, this morning, as we chew on this chapter, there are a couple of specific things to meditate on when it comes to Christ's blood.

First, we should think about how His blood cleanses us. There in verse 14 it says that we are cleansed by the blood of Christ. We're given remission of our sins in verse 22 and our consciences are made clean, meaning that because of this sacrifice and this cleansing we can forever do away with religion and guilt.

In it's basest form, religion is simply an attempt to launder what we've soiled. Some religions are like dry cleaning - where you have to go and pay for your cleansing. We think of Scientology or some of the other cults.

Most religion is like spot cleaning. Trying to get that smudge off. But Jesus comes along and cleanses us with His blood, presenting us spotless to God. We never have to work to earn God's favor. And that's an important thing to remember. It's the most natural thing in the world to think that we have to merit God's blessing or, more normally, that we have to achieve in order to avoid God's anger. But what we see here is that God washes us altogether, making us spotless. When we sin, there's repentance and restoration that need to occur, but there isn't any salvation to be re-earned because Christ's blood is powerful enough to cleanse us altogether of our unrighteousness.

We've been talking for a few weeks all about this new covenant that Jesus talked about, and there in Luke 22 we're told that Jesus' blood brought in the new covenant. He said that when He gave His life at Calvary, He was bringing a new deal to us and, as we've seen, He's bringing the Lion's share to this new partnership. The most important detail is that we're not stuck having to perpetually receive atonement for our sins, but instead the Lord purged them once for all.

Now, as we move around the world we pick up the dust of the earth. There's a lot of sludge out there that we have to move through while we're living this life. But Jesus' blood reminds us that we can go to the Lord and receive cleansing. We've been washed head to toe, but as we live life we can go back to the Lord regularly to have Him wash our feet like He did for His disciples at the Last Supper.

As we draw near to the Lord and let Him get His hands onto our lives He brings that cleansing to our conscience and takes away the weight of our sin. And it's not just a white washing that He does. It's not like with the Pharisees who were only concerned with the outward appearance. No, after the Lord washed His disciples feet He invited them to take the cup, which symbolized His blood, and drink it in.

It's a little strange, but the imagery Jesus used was that when we drink in communion, we're drinking in His blood. Because it's a reminder that we're not just in a religion, but that we're drinking in Christ Jesus and allowing Him to work inside of us as well. Throughout the Bible we're told that there is life in the blood and then we're given this memorial to drink Christ's blood in because the Lord is trying to remind us that He has a life that He wants to put inside us. There is a spiritual nourishment when we drink in Jesus and allow Him to fill us up.

We became Christians and He gave us a new nature and a new heart with new passions and new goals and new purposes. We drank those in when we became believers and took that cup He was offering.

So, as we look at the imagery associated with Christ's blood in the Bible, we see that we're washed in it, making us spotless, and we drink it in, which gives us new life and power. So our sins are cleansed and our hearts are purified and nourished in a brand new way.

Why? So that we can serve the Lord. That's the back half of verse 14 in our text.

Hebrews 9.14 - How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The power of Jesus' blood enables us to serve the living God.

This is a big deal and the second thing for us to think about from this passage.

All of us probably have some living heroes. Maybe they're in your occupational field, maybe they're someone else. But we all have these people who we admire and look up to and are inspired by.

Imagine if that guy came to you today and somehow he knew you by name and said that he was hand-selecting you to do a special job for him. He gave you his personal cell number. He said that he was happy to help out in whatever way he could and that you were his specific pick for this specific job.

I think most of us would blow a gasket!

We should pause to realize that the living God has done just that. He's hand selected you for a significant part of His will and His Kingdom. He knows your name. He's given you access. And He's tapped on your shoulder, hoping you'll do this special job. He looks at your life and says, "I want you to be My guy on this."

That's a big deal.

If we follow the pattern we see in the book of Hebrews - remembering that we've been invited into this partnership with the Lord, we've been commissioned as priests in His Kingdom - we should allow Christ's blood to cleanse us. Then we should allow it to nourish us so that we can serve the Lord. We should do what the priests in the Old Testament did, because that's a type for the ministry. We should go around sprinkling Jesus' blood on everything that we do. Everything we touch.

There in verse 22 we see that almost everything in the Tabernacle was sprinkled and sanctified with blood.

Imagine walking into the tabernacle to bring your offering to the Lord. You walk into this incredible tent, all these great materials and decorations and tools and ornaments. Stuff is overlaid with gold. Everything is hand-crafted and unique. But smeared all over all of it was blood. The priests would take the wool and hyssop and dip it into blood and wipe it all over everything.

That place would be unmistakable for anything other than what it was. You wouldn't think it was a library or a restaurant or a marketplace. You'd walk in there and see that this is a place of sacrifice and death and holiness.

Then we take a look at ourselves and remember that we've been made the temple of the Lord. And we've been commanded to set everything aside in our lives and sanctify it all for the

service of God. Everything in our lives should be smeared with the blood of Christ, so that what we're doing and how we're living is unmistakable. It shouldn't look like anything else.

I wonder if someone looked at my life if they would say that I was unmistakably living a life of sacrifice? A life of holiness. A life of worship. A life cleansed and nourished by Christ's blood. Could someone look at what I say and what I do and walk away thinking, "That guy is bloodied up with Christ's blood."

Because when we open up the Bible and look at the believers who were near to God and devoted to His service, they were immediately recognizable to the people around them as believers on a mission for their God. Guys like Daniel or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Or the disciples when the comment was made of them, "Ok, the one thing we know about these guys is that they have *been with Jesus*." That's what I'm talking about.

Because when God covers us with Christ's blood, and when we drink in that cup, we will be filled with His power and His testimony and we'll be bringing Jesus to all of our activities and conversations. And our lives will be unmistakably marked by the power of God and the testimony of His salvation.

There is power in the blood. But only if it's covering us and nourishing us. When Peter said, "Lord, I don't want You to wash my feet" Jesus said, "Ok, then we're going to have a little problem." Because God intends to wash us and wants us to drink Him in so that everything inside and everything outside is covered with Him.

Thinking about our text - I don't want to go out into my life today without the blood of Christ. I love that in verse 7 where it says, "the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies once a year, *but not without blood!*" Because if he did, he was going to die! So he made sure that he went into that specific place he had been called to with blood on himself and blood in his hands.

I should have that approach for my life. It is blood that sustains life - Christ's blood. And I want it to sustain me today, which means He will be washing me and bringing new life to me and sanctifying me to serve Him, the living God.