

INTRODUCTION

As I am preaching through the book of Ephesians, we come to this wonderful passage that talks about the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible has a lot to say about the blood of Jesus Christ.

One of my favorite movies of all time is "Ben Hur." The part I remember most is not the chariot race. I remember the climax of the movie when the camera begins to move in on three crosses in the distance and ominous storm clouds gather on the horizon. In the movie, you never see the face of Jesus. Instead in the gathering gloom and darkness, a figure on the center cross writhes in pain and agony and his body goes into convulsions of pain in rhythm to the lightning and thunder. Then, the camera focuses on the rain beginning to fall. One single drop of blood falls from Jesus' hand and lands in the pool of rainwater beneath it, and then another drop of blood, and another drop...until there is a pool of rainwater tinted red by the blood of Jesus. Then the pool overflows into a larger pool and it becomes red, and then into a larger pool and then into a stream of water and then into a river—obviously going out into the oceans—symbolizing the worldwide impact of the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus did not come to teach moral principles. If he had come as a teacher, he would have established a university. Jesus did not come to heal people of their sickness or he would have established a hospital. Jesus came to die on a cross to shed his blood for me and for you. You will never enter into Heaven unless the blood of Jesus Christ has been applied to your heart to forgive you of your sins. That's what this passage is all about.

Ephesians 2:11-13. "Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

I. THE BLOOD OF JESUS HAS THE POWER TO RESTORE OUR BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1. The bad news: Sin alienates us from God

There are two things the blood of Christ has the power to do. Number one, the blood of Christ has power to restore our broken relationship with God. The Bible says, "You used to be far away, but the blood of Jesus has restored the relationship that was broken." Notice a couple of things about sin. Number one, sin alienates us from God. By the way, that's what all kinds of sin does. Personal sin alienates you from God. But have you ever noticed sin also alienates you from those you love? The reason some husbands and wives are alienated today is because of sin in their lives. Sin always divides. Love always brings together. In verse 12, Paul says this is who you used to be, and it's not a very pretty picture. He mentions five things describing our lives before we became Christians. If you are not a Christian, this describes your life right now.

a. Non-Believers are separated from God

Number one, he says you are separated from God. The Bible says our sins have caused separation between us and God. In the beginning when God created Adam and Eve, they had a perfect, wonderful relationship with God. There was no separation. I love that passage from the first chapters of the Bible that says God would come into the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening and would walk with Adam and Eve. I have a hard time imagining what that would look like, because I can't conceive of what God actually looks like walking along, because the Bible says "God is not a man" but somehow the presence and the glory of God was there walking along with Adam and Eve. Isn't that a beautiful picture of relationship and fellowship? I wonder what they talked about? Maybe God said, "Adam, how are you doing?" And Adam would say, "Doing pretty good, Lord. How are you doing?" God says, "I'm always doing okay." Then maybe God would ask Eve, "How are *you* doing?" And she would say, "I'm fine, Lord. Adam gives me a little trouble every now and then, but nothing I can't deal with." They had a wonderful relationship, so intimate. But all that changed. When Adam and Eve sinned, that beautiful relationship was destroyed and they suddenly found themselves separated from God. Until you come to Jesus Christ, that describes your relationship to God: Separated.

How close does God seem to you at this moment? Some of you are believers. I know your answer to that question would be, "I have such a close walk with God! I love him and we have such a wonderful relationship. He's closer to me than my very skin and bones." But there are others of you who have a different answer. Your answer is, "God seems to be a million miles away from me. It seems like God is on the backside of the universe and I can't find him no matter how hard I look." That's what sin does. It separates you from God and it doesn't have to be that way. God wants to have a dynamic, personal relationship with you.

b. Non-Believers are excluded from the promise

The second word Paul uses is "excluded." He says in verse 12, "You were separate from Christ...excluded from the covenants of the promise." Adam and Eve had access to all of Paradise, but God excluded them from Paradise and the Bible says he placed two cherubim at the gates to the Garden of Eden. In each of their hands was a flaming sword and they said, "Get out! You cannot come back into Paradise. You are excluded." Until you become a Christian, you are excluded from God's Paradise. It is terrible to be excluded here on earth. There are a lot of places from which I am excluded and cannot get into right now. I couldn't go to some military bases because I don't have the proper clearance. If I could even go over to Augusta, Georgia, to see what many people believe is the most beautiful golf course on earth, the Augusta National Golf Club, there is no way I could get on the grounds of that place today. I could offer them as much money as I have and they would say, "Sorry, you are not a member," or "You are not with a member. You are excluded from this place." There are places on earth where we are all excluded. What's really bad is to be excluded from Paradise, and that's a picture of who we are without Jesus.

c. Non-Believers are foreigners

The third word that is used here is foreigners. Paul says, "You are foreigners to the covenant." We could think of it as foreigners to the kingdom of God. If you are a citizen of the United States

of America, you feel at home. But for those who have ever traveled overseas, remember the way you felt when you were on foreign soil? You felt out of place here, you knew you were just visiting. And you feel that longing to be back home. The Bible says until you become a Christian, you are a foreigner to the kingdom of God. You don't belong in it and you have that sense of knowing you just don't belong." That's how we all were before we came to Christ.

d. Non-Believers have no hope

The fourth phrase he uses in verse 12 is "without hope." Paul says, "It's bad enough you are separated, you are a foreigner, but you don't even have any hope of doing something about it yourself." All of us know what it means to be miserable or unhappy or to suffer. That's bad enough. But when you are suffering and there seems to be no hope, that makes it even worse. Being hopeless says, "Things are bad and I don't see any way they are going to get any better." Here we are separated from God, excluded foreigners, and we see there is nothing we could ever do to change that and there is nothing you can do. God has already done it. But you can't do anything about it, so it's hopeless.

e. Non-Believers are without God

Here's the fifth phrase—and it sums it all up. He says, "You are without God." Look at those five phrases that describe a person who is not a Christian. That describes your life before you became a Christian. The reason you are excluded, separated, the reason a non-Christian doesn't have any hope is because you don't have God and God is far away. This verse says Jesus shed his blood so that relationship could be restored.

2. The good news: Jesus' blood restores our access to God

Here's the first statement: Sin alienates us from God. But the good news is Jesus' blood restores our access to God. That's the thing that says to those cherubim guarding the way to Paradise "Get out of the way guys! Jesus has made a new way for me to enter Paradise." That's what says to those who are separated and excluded from God. Because of Jesus' blood we don't have to be that way. We have been brought near through the blood of the cross. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:19 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body..." The Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem was separated from the rest of the world by a large, thick curtain from which the presence of God emanated, and only one man on one day a year, for six hours on that day, could go into that place and meet God. Everybody else was separated by the curtain. When Jesus died on the cross, the Bible says that curtain was ripped in half from the top to the bottom—not from the bottom to the top or two men could have done it. God was saying, "Whosoever will, may come. You used to be separated, excluded, alienated, foreigners, without hope, without God—but it doesn't have to be that way. Come on in. I love you. I accept you. I welcome you. You don't have to be rejected because of your sin." I don't think there is anyone who at one time or another hasn't felt the pain of rejection. Let's face it: It hurts. Nobody likes to be rejected.

One of the most beautiful romances of the nineteenth century was between Elizabeth Barrett and

Robert Browning, both wonderful poets. Elizabeth Barrett was six years older than Robert Browning. He read some of her poetry and said, “I want to get to know the woman who wrote this.” She was single. The only problem was her father, a very strange individual, who never allowed her to even leave her room. He made her a hermit in her own home. She thought she was an invalid, because he never even let her outside.” Robert Browning began to write letters to her. Her father said, “Absolutely not! You cannot see him. You cannot marry him.” But Robert began to bring her out of her shell, and soon she did leave home and discovered she wasn’t an invalid after all. They fell in love and got married. Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning were two of the brightest spots in the romantic history of the nineteenth century. Some people don’t know this, but her father rejected her because of what she did. He said, “I no longer claim you as my daughter.” Every week she wrote a letter to him pleading for his forgiveness. She wrote her father every week for ten years. After ten years she received a package in the mail, in it was a bundle containing every letter she had ever written to her father—unopened! Talk about the pain of rejection!

We can all relate to that. What I’m trying to say to you is you don’t have to suffer the pain of rejection from God, because it’s just the opposite. God is writing a letter to *you*, letter after letter, saying, “I love you. I want to forgive you. I want to accept you.” You need to open those letters and let God love you and accept you through the blood of Jesus Christ.

II. THE BLOOD OF JESUS HAS THE POWER TO REMOVE THE STAIN OF OUR SIN

Number two, the blood of Jesus has power to remove the stain of our sin. In other words the blood of Jesus washes us from our sins. The Bible says sin is like a stain. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” We sometimes think of our own good deeds as being clean before God, but the Bible says in Isaiah even our good deeds, our righteousness, is as “filthy rags” and that word in Hebrew literally means “bloody rags.” We think of blood staining rather than blood cleansing.

William Shakespeare wrote the beautiful play “Macbeth,” based on a true historical event. Most East Texans know a whole lot more about McDonald’s than we do Macbeth, but you need to hear the story again. Macbeth had a very ambitious wife who pushed him. She thought he could be king so she talked her husband into murdering King Duncan, the good king of Scotland. One night they slipped into his bedroom and Macbeth thrust a dagger into the king’s body, killing him. His hands were bloodstained. Lady Macbeth said, “Wash it off with a little water.” How easy it is then. Some people think you can sin all you want and just wash your hands and that’s all the consequences of sin—but not Macbeth. He struggled with the guilt and shame of his bloodstained hands. As he was looking at the ocean and his bloodstained hands, he makes that famous statement, “Will all of great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood from my hand?” Then he said, “No, rather this hand shall make the multitudinous seas incarnadine.” In other words, “My hand is going to turn the ocean into blood, making the green ocean red. I’m guilty. There’s a stain on my hand and water is not going to wash it off. I need something else that can cleanse me of my sin.”

He was saying that every one of us has bloodstained hands and we go through life trying to find a way to get them cleaned off, like that beautiful song says, “What can wash away my sin?”

Nothing but the blood of Jesus." The Bible 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." I don't claim to understand how Jesus' blood can cleanse me of my sins and I don't have to understand it, I just have to accept it. Sometimes we have a hard time even picturing how blood can cleanse. We know blood stains, but how can blood cleanse?

Your body itself is an illustration of the handiwork and the power of God. Think about your own blood for just a moment. Inside your body there are 5-6 quarts of blood continually circulated by your heart, which beats an average of 70 times a minute. Every beat of your heart pumps about 4 ounces of blood into the system. That means over a 24-hour period 2,500 gallons of your blood will flow through your system. The blood travels through your lungs, picking up oxygen and nutrients and takes them to every cell in your body, and the blood is giving your body life. The power of blood gives life, that's why we have blood drives, because by giving our blood we are giving life to others. But did you also know blood purifies? Of those 2,500 gallons of blood that pump through your system, about 50 gallons per day is pumped down your renal artery to your kidneys, because that blood flowing through your body has picked up impurities and toxins—waste products. If the blood wasn't cleansing you of these impurities and your kidneys weren't breaking down the blood and removing those impurities, you and I would die within a matter of hours. So the blood cleanses us of impurities, physically speaking. Spiritually speaking, the blood of Jesus removes the impurity of sin from our lives. The Bible says our bodies are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and even that is an illustration of how the blood can cleanse us of sin.

Let me make two statements about how the blood cleanses us from sin. I want to make both of them and then I want to tell you a story to illustrate them. Number one, when the blood of Jesus is shed in your heart, there is a complete cleansing from sin's penalty. You are washed in the blood of Jesus and the penalty of sin is completely washed away once and for all. Number two, there is also a continual cleansing from sin's power. The Bible teaches salvation is to the soul what a bath is to the body: It's being cleaned up. When you come to Jesus Christ and you put your faith in him, his blood washes you clean and the penalty of sin is absolutely washed away. What's the penalty of sin? Hell! Separation from God. When you as a sinner come to Jesus and say, "Lord, I believe in you, I trust you. Forgive my sins." he does and his blood cleanses you once and for all of the penalty for every sin you have ever committed, and for every sin you will ever commit. It is washed away, gone. That's why once you become a Christian, when you sin again, you don't have to come back to God and say, "God, save me again. Wash my sins away again." No. We firmly believe that once you have been born again, you are always saved. God keeps you. That's once and for all. But as a Christian, we continue to sin. What do we do about those sins? We come to Jesus and confess our sins. It is his blood that keeps us clean day by day. That's why John 1:9 is confusing to some people "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

Let me tell you a story that will help it make sense to you. In John 13, Jesus was with the disciples the night before he was crucified. Their feet were dirty, dusty and caked with soil. They stunk. It was the job of the most menial slave to wash feet. But no slave was there that night. The disciples said to themselves, "I'm too good to do that." But in a beautiful picture of servanthood, Jesus rose, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around him and bent down with a basin of water

and washed the feet of each disciple, including Judas Iscariot, whom he knew would betray him in a matter of hours. He washed their feet tenderly and lovingly. Jesus was doing a whole lot more than just washing dirt off their feet—he was teaching a lesson about salvation and sin. He comes to Simon Peter who says, "Oh no, Lord. You're not going to wash my feet." When I read that knowing Peter the way I do, I think, "Peter, you had better let him wash your feet, because you are always sticking them in your mouth." But Jesus said, "You need to let me do what I am about to do for you." We pick up the story with the following passage of scripture:

John 13:8-10. "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

He was not just talking about dirt, he was talking about sin. Peter asked if he had to be clean to be a part of Jesus, and when Jesus said yes, Peter wanted to be washed all over, but Jesus said he had already been cleansed, meaning he had already been saved once and for all Jesus' blood removed the penalty of his. You only need one bath, but you need many spiritual foot washings.

Here's the lesson: When you come to Jesus, he gives you a bath and the penalty of sin once and for all is done away with, but as we walk in this filthy world our spiritual feet get dirty and we sin. This is a dirty world. Just look at the newsstands. Look at what's on television. Somebody once said, "Never since Manhattan was sold for \$24 has so much dirt been sold so cheaply as what we have in America today." When you walk out into the world, your feet get dirty and you sin. That's why you come to Jesus and say, "Lord, I'm dirty. Would you cleanse me of this sin in my life?" Not to go to heaven but to be right with God.

I'm looking at some of you who have already had the bath. You've been born again. You don't need a bath again. Some of you have dirty feet. There's unconfessed sin in your life as a Christian. What are you going to do about your sin? Are you going to ignore it? You can't ignore dirty feet for very long—they start stinking. What are you going to do? Deny it? If you say you have no sin, the Bible says you are a liar. The truth is not in you. What are you going to do? Confess it and say, "Lord, I am already a Christian, but wash my feet spiritually. I confess this sin to you. Clean me up." That's what the blood of Jesus has the power to do, to restore our broken relationship; to remove the stain of our sin. Paul is saying, "You used to be a long way from God, but it doesn't have to be that way. Because of his blood you can be as close to God as your very heart."

CONCLUSION

A physician friend of mine told me about a time during his residency at an inner city hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. He was on a cycle of working in the emergency room. One evening they brought in a 16- or 17-year-old who had been critically injured in an automobile accident. As they began to cut his clothes off, it became obvious he was a wealthy, because not too many teens wear Rolex watches and designer clothes. They were doing everything they could to save his life, but he had massive internal injuries. The boy's two parents were summoned to the ER.

My friend later discovered the parents had been legally separated for two years, but not divorced. They just hated each other and had not even spoken to one another in two years. Now here they were face to face over the body of their only son, hoping he would survive. The doctors did everything they could, but they couldn't save the boy's life. The boy was wearing an oxygen mask and couldn't speak, but just before he lost consciousness, he took the hand of his father and his mother and over his dying body brought their two hands together and then he died. My friend said the husband and wife got back together but oh, the cost of that reconciliation!

That's exactly what Jesus did for us. We were alienated from God, separated from him, and just before he died, Jesus took the hand of his father and the hand of sinful mankind and brought us together—then he died. When you understand how much Jesus loved you to do that for you, it's impossible for you to walk away from that kind of love.

OUTLINE

THE BLOOD OF JESUS HAS THE POWER TO...

I. RESTORE OUR BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1. The bad news: Sin alienates us from God

Non-Believers are...

- a. Separated from God
- b. Excluded from the promise
- c. Foreigners
- d. Without hope
- e. Without God

2. The good news: Jesus' blood restores our access to God

II. REMOVE THE STAIN OF OUR SIN



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes