

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

The opening stanza of a hymn written by Robert Lowery reads, “What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Most people who profess to be Christians would agree with those words, but you might be surprised to learn that not all who profess Christ is Savior have agreed with Lowery’s song. At one time at least one major denomination thought the idea of blood atonement was so distasteful that they removed all references to it from one of their worship songbooks. One of the modern speech translations put out by the American Bible Society, *Today’s English Version* (also known as *Good News for Modern Man*), has removed the word “blood” from a multitude of New Testament passages where Greek word for blood (*haima*) appears in the original texts. It is unfortunate that some feel that God’s way of saving mankind from sin is repugnant and needs to be revised by modern man. Such people need to read First Corinthians 1:18-21, 25; and First Peter 1:17-19. God’s thoughts and ways are different and higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:6-9). We can never devise or implement a greater plan for saving ourselves, although some seem to want to try.

Others who believe in the saving grace of God through the blood of Christ misunderstand how Christ’s blood is applied to cleanse our souls from sin. Just how and when does Christ’s blood forgive us? Another common problem with the way some view Christ’s blood sacrifice is that they fail to see how it relates to the role of the church in God’s plan of salvation. We will at least touch on all these topics in this and forthcoming issues.

BLOOD ATONEMENT

The need for a blood atonement comes from the fact that man has sinned against a holy and righteous God, and our sins separate us from God (Genesis 3; Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:23). “Atonement” refers to sacrifice made to restore man’s relationship with God. It is an offering to God for our sins with the idea of appeasing Him and satisfying His demands for justice. When God’s law is violated the penalty must be paid. The first acceptable sacrifice recorded in Scripture was a blood sacrifice by killing an animal (Genesis 4:1-8). This was the first event mentioned following the sins of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden for which God cast them out. It illustrates man’s need for forgiveness through blood sacrifice. Abel offered this sacrifice “by faith,” meaning that God told him what to do and how to do it (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:4).

Blood atonement was also an essential part of the Law of Moses. God told Moses, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). By God’s direction it was the blood of a sacrificial lamb that delivered Israel from the plague of death in Egypt (Exodus 12:7, 13).

BLOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is set forth as our Passover Lamb who saves us from the plague of spiritual death (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). Christ Himself speaks of His blood which was to be shed to bring about our forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28). Nearly every NT writer

speaks of the blood of Christ as the means of our salvation. Read Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 13:12; First Peter 1:18-19; First John 1:7; Revelation 1:5. Many others could be given.

Although blood sacrifices in the OT were required, they were not sufficient in God’s view to take away man’s sins (Hebrews 10:4). God held off calling man to account for his sins as long as they offered the required blood sacrifices (Hebrews 9:13-15). All OT sacrifices typified and looked forward to the perfect sacrifice of God’s Son, the Lamb Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Only His blood sacrifice could “take away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22), but animal blood could not take away sins (10:4). Therefore, the blood of Christ had to be shed in order for God to forgive mankind of our sins (9:11-12).

THE HOW AND WHEN CHRIST’S BLOOD SAVES

If we consider that sin is the common spiritual disease of all mankind and that the blood of Christ is the remedy or prescription to cure us, we may easily see **how** the blood of Christ saves us from sin. Any remedy, to be effective, must be applied in the manner prescribed by the physician. In our case, Jesus is the Great Physician and the medicine that heals us is His blood. By the proper application of His blood to our sin sick souls we can be cured. Without the proper application there is no cure.

Taping two aspirin to the top of one’s head will not relieve a headache. Drinking a bottle of iodine will not keep a wound on the leg from being infected. Neither will improper application of Christ’s blood heal us from our sins. If the soldiers at the foot of Christ cross had rubbed His blood

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all over their bodies or had drunk some of it, they would still have been the same rank sinners. The application of the healing benefits of Christ's blood is a spiritual application, administered by God when we obey His word. One has not **automatically** been forgiven because Jesus shed His blood nearly two thousand years ago. There is no such thing as universal salvation of all men. Only those who do God's will can be saved by the blood of Christ (cf. Matthew 7:21-23).

While He hung on the cross, the Lord uttered a prayer to God, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Did God hear Jesus' prayer? Indeed, He did. Did God immediately forgive those who crucified His Son? **He did not!** In fact, fifty days later, after Christ had risen from the dead and ascended back to heaven, the apostle Peter still held the Jews guilty for taking Jesus with "wicked hands" and having "crucified and slain" Him (Acts 2:23). Peter did go on to tell the Jews who heard him how they could receive remission (forgiveness) of sins through Christ (vers-

es 36-40). What Peter gave to them was information how to petition God to apply the healing merits of Christ's blood to their sin sick souls.

Let us consider **what** heals us from our sins. The "blood" of Christ is **what** brings us "remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). The "blood" of Jesus is **what** "washed us from our sins" (Revelation 1:5). The "blood" of the Lord is **what** "cleanses our conscience" from our sins to begin serving God (Hebrews 9:14). **The major question is "when" God applies the saving benefits of Christ's blood to our souls!** The Scriptures clearly answer that question and we must accept this as the only proper application of Christ's blood to the soul of a sinner to save him/her from one's past sins in becoming a Christian.

According to Acts 2:36-38, God applies Christ's blood to us **when** we culminate our initial obedience in being "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Faith (Acts 2:36) and repentance (2:38) must precede baptism, but it is only **in baptism** that the **when** of remission of sins by Christ's blood can be said to have occurred. Jesus blood that was shed "for remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28) brings remission **when** we obey Him in being baptized. This is in complete harmony with what Jesus stated in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Salvation from sin by Christ's blood follows only **when** faith is followed by baptism. The apostle John clearly stated that the Lord "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5), but God told Saul of Tarsus, through Ananias, that the **when** of that washing would only come if he would "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Of course, Saul, who became the apostle Paul, had believed and shown signs of repentance before being baptized (Acts 9:1-11). However he was told his sins would not be washed away until **the act of baptism**. Hebrews 9:14 states our consciences are cleansed by the blood of Christ, but the apostle Peter tells us **when**

that cleansing of the conscience takes place. After reminding his readers that Noah and his family were saved by water, Peter said, "The like figure whereunto even baptism does also save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20-21). Christ's blood cleanses our conscience, but it does so **when** we are baptized in order to be saved. That is when God applies the merits of Christ's shed blood to heal our souls from sin. Since Peter says, "baptism doth also now save us," one cannot have a conscience cleansed by Christ's blood ("a good conscience toward God") until **after baptism**.

CONCLUSION

Some profess to believe in the blood of Christ as **what saves** us, but they deny or ignore plain and repeated Bible teaching as to **when it saves** one. The healing balm of the blood of the Great Physician is applied by God to our sin sick souls **when we obey** Him in becoming Christians (Hebrews 5:9; Matthew 7:21-29; Luke 6:46). There is no other cure. There is no other application.

Paul said, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). That death is eternal separation and everlasting punishment "for them who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). We plead with you as God pleaded with Israel of old: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Ezekiel 33:11)? If you do not have Christ's blood applied to your soul in God's appointed way, you will suffer eternal death. This is not a ceasing to exist as some denominations teach, but a conscious eternal torment. Do not listen to any religious quacks who tell you that you can contact the merits of Christ's blood some other way. Read and obey the Scriptures we have set forth in this article. If you

believe that Christ's blood is the **what** of salvation, will you not also accept the Scriptures that say **when** that salvation from sin can be claimed by you? Contact us if we can help you or you need information about a church of Christ in your area. [Next month: "Christ's Blood and His Church"]

HOW MUCH CAN I ENDURE?

by Bob Spurlin

The writer, for over five years, has waged a battle against the dreaded disease, multiple sclerosis. My change in life style has been a shock to the system, and to my family. This writer has always been active as an evangelist, father, and husband for about thirty years. My devotion to my loved ones and commitment to my work has been the center of my life. However, this writer is very aware of countless others who have to endure even more in their daily existence. As a child the old expression, "woe is me," suggested the difficulties and trials that one was experiencing. While a young boy there was a poem that illustrates these prior points. Note part of it, "Once I complained about having no shoes until there appeared a boy that had no feet. I also complained because there were no glasses to help me read, then I saw a boy that could not see." This illustrates clearly that if we look around, we will always discover those that are in a more serious circumstance. What is the correct formula for dealing with those who are hurting, dealing with a dreaded disease, coping with the loss of a loved one, or another serious dilemma? Jesus came into a world that was hurting and sick at heart. He is the Great Physician and will deal with whatever needs we might have. The Savior was eating with the publicans and sinners as the Pharisees began to murmur, "Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners? And Jesus answered and said, they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance" (Luke 5:30-32). Jesus, the Great Physician, can heal the human heart and cure the ills that afflict the mass of humanity (1 Pet. 2:21-25).

This writer was preaching in the hills of East Tennessee when he met a man that was very angry against God. His son had escaped dismemberment and/or any serious injury while he was serving in the Vietnam War. This father was so thrilled to have his son home and in one piece that he was beside himself with joy. Unfortunately, the son worked for Tennessee Power Inc. The first day on the job he was climbing a power pole when he inadvertently suffered death by grabbing a live wire that contained thousands of volts of electricity. "Where was God when my son was killed?" the father said to the preacher. The preacher replied, "He was at the same place when His son was killed." Playing the blame game is always easy and disparages God for death, illness, taxes, financial ruin, etc. James, the brother of our Lord, said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (or trials), for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted (tried), I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1: 12-13). We must not blame God for all our ills in life. My precious daughter suffered death at the hands of a reckless driver, and then people responded, "It is God's will." My family and this writer do not accept the predisposition that it was God's will, or that God was at fault for such a crushing nightmare. Reader friends, can you imagine the God of heaven sitting on his majestic throne causing terrible accidents to occur, inflicting disease, hardship, or other forms of adversity whenever the mood strikes him? Have we forgotten the story of Job in the Old Testament? It was Satan's actions that subjected Job and his family to the tragedy inflicted upon them, not God's (Job 1: 8-22). The patriarch, Job, did not beat his breast and blame God for his ills. He recognized the source of his

problems and it was Satan. Paul in the New Testament stated to the Corinthians, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). Paul was warning the Christians at Corinth that we should not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Subsequently, many devices and tools are in the arsenal of Satan that can assault and victimize us at will. Adversity in all its forms and compositions can alter our thinking and sway us in our judgment and decision making process. What is the real clue or glimmer of hope?

Hope versus despair and true solidarity seems shaky at best when faced with unbearable obstacles. Whatever form of adversity we may be facing, we can endure it and reach the mountain-top. Hope through Christ is the first step that we must take (John 14: 6). A good physician who gives us a thorough examination will ask a series of questions that will give him our family history. It may seem tedious and time consuming, yet this is the only way he can reach an accurate diagnosis. Jesus, the Great Physician, knows His patient and is aware of our physical and spiritual maladies. Overcoming adversity can be therapeutic, which includes reaching out to others. This writer has discovered over many years that one can overcome loneliness and depression by seeing others. If one is active and able to get out, try visiting a patient at a nursing home facility. Many have discovered that their problems are not nearly as bad as they previously thought. **As a shut-in myself, nothing gets me charged-up more than receiving cards, notes, and letters written by the individual.** Start writing a journal or book of your life that conveys some of your remarkable experiences. Good times and bad will give a clear and panoramic view of your life. This writer has begun such a task and it is something that they will pass down to my family and hopefully succeeding generations. Again, it is very therapeutic and healthy and will provide mental and spiritual well being. Christ is the solution and satisfies every need that we have (John 6:68; Eph. 1:3).

God will not overwhelm us with such burdens that we cannot endure (1 Cor. 10: 13). He always provides a way out, if we are willing to look for it. Reader friends, may God bless your quest to find peace and endure unto the end (Rev. 2: 10).

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[Editor's Note: Since I wrote the material in parentheses below in the January issue of FCGN, Brother Spurlin has had another setback. He has now lost the use of his right arm, which he used to type on his computer from his bed. He wants to continue writing but will need some voice activated computer software to type for him. There are a number of other items that can make Bob's life easier. Will you help by reading below and buying a book or more. You will also benefit greatly!]

{Brother Bob Spurlin has been and is a faithful gospel preacher with a dedicated sense of duty. Bob and I were in the Memphis School of Preaching together where he was a year ahead of me. Even in his declining health, suffering repeated attacks of multiple sclerosis, being now bedfast, he has remained as faithful as ever and as active as possible for him to be so. As one might suspect, his condition has put his family in great financial difficulty, from his medical bills and his inability to help provide family income.

With the help of brother Tom Holland and Paul Sain, Bob has published a book of about 50 articles on various biblical topics, many of which have to do with dealing with life's difficulties. The article above is the second we have published from his book, **Tackling Life's Troubles**. As you can imagine from reading the article above, Bob has gained personal and valuable insight on how to accept and handle the serious problems that often confront us. He shares that insight and gives Biblical guidance to help us overcome disappointment, disaster, and depression. You can help yourself to deal with your problems and help brother Spurlin at the same time by ordering one or more books from him. All the profits

from the book go directly to help Bob's financial needs. Buy a copy for yourself, one for your preacher or family members, and one for the church library. This is a valuable addition to anyone's library. The cost of each book is \$11.50, which includes postage and handling. If you want to add a little more and can do so you will be helping a true servant of God. You can reach Bob at the address at the end of his article, by telephone (256) 778-8020, or by e-mail <prechteach@aol.com> Please note that we do not have the books for sale at our **FCGN** address.}

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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