

## The Blood of Christ and The Difference It Makes

*Ephesians 2:11-13*

**T**he blood of Christ. Some people who may not understand its importance may think that Christianity focuses too much on the blood of Christ. They say that Christianity is a bloody religion, and they are repulsed by all this talk about the blood. But Christians believe that the blood of Jesus is precious! We even sing about it: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” We remember the blood of Christ every time we drink the grape juice during Holy Communion.

Paul had introduced the idea of the blood of Christ earlier in chapter one, when he wrote, “*In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace*” (v. 7). And in presenting his case, he has been slowly building up to a crescendo of why the blood of Christ is so important.

Verse eleven begins with the word “therefore.” It sounds a little corny, but it works—anytime you see the word “therefore” in one of Paul’s letters, it’s a good idea to ask what it’s “there for.” It refers to what he has just said in vv. 1-10. Among other things, we have been made alive in Christ because of God’s great love for us; we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms; we have been saved by grace through faith as a gift from God; and finally, we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

“*Therefore,*” or on the basis of all that, there are some things that we should know. Paul wrote, “*Therefore, remember.*” Paul has something very wonderful to tell them, but before he does, he wants them to remember what they were before Christ came into their lives. He wants them to remember how hopeless things were for them before they came to know Christ. Verse eleven tells us that the Jews looked with contempt on the Gentiles. Let’s make it clear: a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew—and that would include us. And in fact, the Gentiles were not included in the original covenants that God made with the Jews. The Jews believed that God created Gentiles so the fires of hell would have enough fuel. Not a very good prospect for us, is it?

Let’s don’t make the mistake of reading this and assuming that Paul was only talking to them—since we are Gentiles as well, we need to see this as applying to us. “Remember what *you* were” in the words of Paul becomes “Let *us* remember

what *we* were before Christ.” And what we see in verse twelve makes it clear that without Christ things didn’t look too good for any of us.

In fact, it couldn’t get any worse. Paul said that we were “*separate from Christ.*” The word translated “*separate*” can be traced back to a word which gives us our English word “chasm.” There was a wide gulf between us and Christ, and we had no hope of bridging it. Theological John Stott wrote this about salvation: “The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it . . . but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they.” Wow! And there was nothing any of us could do about it. We were separate from Christ, without Christ, without salvation or any hope of it. That is a desperate state to be in.

Because we were separate from Christ, there were some other things that followed, and they’re all listed right here in verse twelve. **First, we were “*excluded from citizenship in Israel,*”** which means that we had absolutely no hope of being a part of God’s Kingdom. We were on the outside looking in, and this was a permanent condition.

**Second, separated from Christ we were “*foreigners to the covenants of the promise.*”** That means much more than just that we were not Jews. If I traveled to another country, I most likely would embarrass myself because I do not know the language or the customs. Before Christ, we were foreigners to the whole idea of God and salvation. It made no sense to us at all.

**Third, separated from Christ we were without hope.** When we have hope, we are looking forward with expectancy to something good. When we have *no* hope, the future not only looks glum, but there is not even anything there but meaningless-ness. Some of the saddest words we read in the Bible are found in Job 7:7, where Job says. “*My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to an end without hope.*” And in our world today, there are so, so many people who have no hope of eternal life. They have no hope of anything better than this, because they do not know Christ. Do you know Him?

**Fourth, separated from Christ, we are without God.** The word translated “*without God*” in verse twelve gives us our English word “atheist.” But it may not be that they do not believe in God as much as it means that there is no God in their lives. Someone has said that the “hell” of hell would be knowing that you were totally and forever separated from God, that there was a chasm between you and Him that could never be bridged.

*“...separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.”* Sounds a little depressing, doesn't it? But it was so important that these original readers in Ephesus know what they had been—what their lives had been like—before Christ came in. It is important for us to know that, too—not because we enjoy being sad and depressed, but because when we really understand what our condition was without Christ, then we can better understand and appreciate what He's done for us. Our hearts overflow with thanksgiving when we realize just what He has done.

So, Paul laid out the bad news before he gave them the good. That's the way you were, he said in verse thirteen, *“But now.”* Now you are in Christ Jesus, and *“you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”* And in that one verse, those few words, the whole picture changes for us. He tells us that there is a big difference in the before and after, and that the blood of Christ has made that difference.

How does the blood of Christ make that difference? You remember in the Old Testament that the Jews had to offer animal sacrifices to atone for their sins. It even went all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden—animals had to die in order for them to be clothed after they had sinned.

If I were a Jew who had sinned, I would take an animal to the priest, who would sacrifice that animal for my sins. In essence, my sin would be symbolically transferred to the animal, and since the penalty for sin is death, the animal would die in my place. It worked pretty well, except that it wasn't a permanent solution, and my sin would never completely be taken away from me. I can turn over a new leaf, but it wouldn't be very long until it was as black and stained as the old one. That was the Old Covenant, the Old Testament.

One day when John the Baptist was preaching, he saw Jesus walking toward him and he said, *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29) What did John the Baptist mean when he called Jesus the “Lamb of God”? He meant that Jesus became that animal, that Lamb of God, Who would be sacrificed for us in our place. The big difference is that this is now a permanent solution—Jesus “takes away” our sin, once and for all. Hebrews 7:27 tells us that Jesus *“sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”* In the Temple, there were no chairs for the priests to sit on, because the work of redemption and sacrifice went on all day. The work of Christ is finished, and so we read in Hebrews 8 that Jesus *“sat down at the right hand of the throne of the*

*Majesty in heaven.*” A. W. Tozer once observed, “The atonement in Jesus Christ’s blood is perfect; there isn’t anything that can be added to it. It is spotless, impeccable, flawless. It is perfect as God is perfect.”

The blood of Christ became for us our permanent sacrifice, and that makes a great big difference. So let’s look at Ephesians 2, and take verse thirteen and bounce it off verse twelve, and see what happens.

## **1** Because of the blood of Christ, we have been given access to God

Paul had said, that we were “*excluded from citizenship in Israel.*” Now he says, “*you who once were far away have been brought near.*” Anyone outside of Christ has no hope of even approaching God. Why is that? Is this some kind of exclusive club?

Paul may have been referring to the way the Temple was constructed. In that day there were many Gentiles who were attracted to the worship of the One True God. But they were not Jews. They could worship God, but they couldn’t go inside the Temple. All the way inside was the Holy of Holies, where the High Priest went once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people. There was a place designated for anyone who was not a Jew, and it was on the outer perimeter of the Temple. It was far away from the Holy of Holies as possible. It pictured the hopeless condition of those who were not Jews.

Christ’s death changed all that. Previously the Jews obtained righteousness by placing their faith in the shed blood of animals which were sacrificed in the Temple. And the Gentiles had no hope of salvation at all. The blood of Christ changed all that for both Jew and Gentile. Now we have the same access to God as do the Chosen People. We were far away from God because of our sins, but now we have been “*brought near.*” We have access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, an access which was made possible by His blood.

We are able to enter that Holy of Holies, in a spiritual sense. We are able to approach God ourselves and lay our petitions before Him. We are no longer shut out from His Presence. That’s what the blood of Christ did for us!

## **2** Because of the blood of Christ, all the promises of God are now ours

Verse twelve tells us next that we were “*foreigners to the covenants of the*

*promise.*” In other words, the promise of a Messiah given to the Jews was now extended to everyone who believed. When we read in John 3:16 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life, that promise is for us, too—not just the Jews. When we read in 1 John 2:25 that God has promised eternal life, that promise is for us because of the blood of Christ. Psalm 34:19 tells us “*A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all,*” that promise is for us because of the blood of Christ.

Here are a few more: “*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*” (John 1:12); “*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:29); “*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*” (Matthew 6:6); “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11:28-29); “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*” (Revelation 21:4). And so many more!

All of those promises—each and every one of them—are now ours through the blood of Christ. When the blood of Christ was shed, it included all who would believe on His Name. That’s what the blood of Christ did for us!

### **3 Because of the blood of Christ, we now have hope**

The blood of Christ answers the third problem we had, in that before Christ we were “*without hope.*” Christ Himself is our hope. We’re not talking about mere wishful thinking about the future, but in the Biblical use of the word, Christ is the One Who has provided an expectation of something real and tangible. He is the One Who has given us meaning and purpose, and the promise of eternal life and a home in Heaven.

The blood of Christ has provided forgiveness for our sins, and in that we have hope. We have rest for our souls and abundant life! We can have joy even in adversity. We have the love of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us as we move through our daily lives. And here’s the good part: there is nothing and no one who can take that away from us! You might have your home broken into and your possessions stolen, but no one can steal your relationship with Christ and your

hope in Him. Disease or injury might steal your health, but no one can take away your hope in Christ.

That's why we can sing with exuberance, "My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Other things may provide some degree of hope, but we have all seen those things fail us when it mattered most. The blood of Christ has rescued us from the despair of having no hope, of wondering what the future holds, from the anguish of being without purpose. That's what the blood of Christ did for us!

## **4** Because of the blood of Christ, we now have a relationship with God

The fourth problem the blood of Christ answers for us is that before we were "without God." Can you imagine a more hopeless, miserable condition to be in than to know that you are without God, and will be forever? The blood of Christ has changed all that! No longer are we without Him. No longer do we have to face the problems and trials of life without Him who is our Refuge, our Hope, our Strength, Our Mighty Tower.

He is our Banner, our Healer, our Shepherd, our Sure Foundation. Because of the blood of Christ, we have entered into a relationship that cannot spoil, rot or decay. He is our Shield, our Peace, and our Hiding Place. We have been born into His Family, so that we can call Him Father.

All of that, and so much more, because of the blood of Christ. We're not talking about a religion, or a system of beliefs. Aren't you glad about that? We're talking about a *relationship* with a loving, compassionate, forgiving, merciful Heavenly Father, One who holds us and walks with us and encourages us and comforts us.

This past Thursday night, something wonderful happened in Tampa Bay, Florida. Nine-year-old Alayna Adams was getting ready to do something she had always dreamed of: throw out the first pitch at a Tampa Bay Rays baseball game. Her dad, Will Adams, a lieutenant colonel stationed in Afghanistan for most of the past two years, had filmed a video that appeared on the stadium video screen. He told his daughter to focus, and have a good time, and that he would see her soon.

So Alayna stepped up and threw the ball as hard as she could toward the catcher behind home plate. The catcher scooped up the ball, then took off his mask. It was her dad! The video of Alayna running to her dad's arms has been seen by millions

of people since then. There was no hesitation on her part. She ran to him and jumped into his arms, knowing that he would receive her and hold her. When I saw that video, I thought about how we have such confidence in the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father, that we can run into His arms and know that He is waiting to receive us.

All that divides us from God is now gone because of the blood of Christ! So how do I receive eternal life? How do I get closer to God? How do I revive my spirit? How do I become victorious over sin? There is no other way except the blood of Christ! It is not because we are Americans, or because we are good, or even because God is love. It is because of the blood of Christ. The words are as clear as they can be: *“you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”*

The blood of Christ makes all the difference. He became the sacrifice for our sins. Before Christ saved us, we had no access to God, we were lost, without hope and without God. ***But now!*** All that is changed.

Do you know Jesus today? That’s an important question, because if you do not know Him, you are in the same condition as those we’ve described from verse twelve. You are separated from Christ. You have no access to God. You have none of the promises of eternal life. You have no real, lasting hope. And you do not have a relationship with God. The good news—in fact, the greatest news—that you could hear today is that God has made it possible through the blood of Christ for you to be redeemed, to have your sins paid for, to have an eternal home in heaven.

*Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
Are you washed in the soul-cleansing blood of the Lamb?  
Are your garments spotless?  
Are they white as snow?  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?  
(Elisha Hoffman)*