

THE TRUE SIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

(This message is not completely original with me)

Hebrews 9:22

Introduction: Every give blood? Why? Think about the value of blood then think about Jesus giving His blood for us on the cross. Begin to make sense? There have been many definitions surrounding the Christian faith, such as ethical, theological, reforming and other ideas but first and above all, the Christian faith is that of redemption, the deliverance of souls.

The true sign of the Christian faith is not a burning bush or two stone tablets or a seven-branched lamp stand or a halo over someone's head nor is it even a golden crown. The true sign of the Christian faith is a rugged and **bloody** cross.

Over 175 times in the New Testament God reveals that redemption comes by blood. Every wonder why God chose blood and not something else to redeem us by?

When God planned to redeem the world (from the very start) His love for people and how to punish their sin at the same time created a problem. The CROSS became the answer. For upon the cross, God mixed His laws and His love. On a cross, God could punish sin but be able to take the punishment Himself through His own Son, Jesus Christ. But why blood?

I. HISTORY OF MANKIND IS WRITEN IN BLOOD

1. Almost every culture and religion has believed in blood sacrifices atoning for wrongs.
 - The Old Testament describes many religions of many nations requiring blood sacrifices.
 - The Aztecs sacrificed as many as 20,000 human beings each year.
 - Anthropologists and historians have estimated that 95% of the world's religions practiced blood offerings.
2. Where did blood offerings originate? Why is it in man to think he must make a blood sacrifice of some sort to appease God or gods?
 - The answer is in God's Word.

II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BLOOD?

1. Redemption of mankind actually began before man got here. Jesus was a "*...lamb slain before the foundation of the world...*"
 - Before the Garden of Eden there was a Garden of Gethsemane in the mind of God.
 - God knew what man would do before He created him.
2. Remember how God placed man in the Garden of Eden with only one "Don't!. "*...do not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil...*"
 - Satan tempted the pair by raising doubts in their minds about God's trustworthiness.
 - They believed Satan and sinned and immediately saw themselves naked and then they hid.
 - Confronted by God, making flimsy excuses, they didn't realize that God already knew it all.
 - Each blamed someone else, not wanting to take responsibility for what they had done.

- Excuses and placing the blame on someone else for one's sins started in the Garden of Eden.
3. Instead of God slaying the couple, He killed an animal and used its skin to cover their nakedness.
 - **Note that this is the first time that blood was shed for something man did wrong - sin.**
 - Here the pattern was started for here is where man's sinning started.
 4. Of the two sons of Adam and Eve, one became "farmer" and the other a "rancher."
 - God called for an offering from each so one slew a lamb and the other brought produce.
 - God accepted the lamb, a blood offering but rejected the produce offering of the other.
 - **A thing learned here is that man never comes to God on his own merits, works, no matter how good they seem to him/her. GOD REQUIRES BLOOD.**
 - *"...without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin..."*
 5. God raised up the man Moses to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt.
 - God sent several plagues with the words, *"...let my people go..."*
 - Finally God told Moses of a death angel coming and every home that did not have **blood** from a lamb sprinkled on the door posts would see death within.
 - Every family that slew a lamb and sprinkled its **blood** on their door posts was spared.
 - *"...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."*
 - Thus the pattern becomes even more clear, *"...without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin..."*
 6. On their way to the promised land, God had the people build a portable tabernacle.
 - On a certain day of each year, everyone would gather at the tabernacle and their high priest would pray for their sins over a lamb, slay it, then take its **blood** into the most sacred part of the tabernacle and there **wait for three (3) hours** until God accepted their **blood offering**. Then the priest would emerge and shout with raised hands, **'IT IS FINISHED!!!'**
 - The pattern is now set. The people of God knew how God hated sin but how He loved the sinner and that the only way for a sinful person to approach God was by **blood**.
 7. In the fullness of time, Jesus was born.
 - Did you ever wonder why God chose Shepherds to tell first? Remember, it was sheep that would be offered at the temple in sacrifice. God was telling them in a sort of way that they were about to be out of a job.
 - John the Baptist was the popular preacher and one day when he saw Jesus he said, *"...Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*
 - The people who heard, understood what John said, for they had been sacrificing lambs for generations.
 8. Unnoticed by most is the pattern established in the Bible:
 - Starting off it was one lamb for one person (Abel).
 - In Egypt, just before freedom, it was one lamb for one family (passover).
 - In the Wilderness, it was one lamb for the entire nation.
 - Now, there is one lamb for the **whole human race**.
 - Jesus said, *"...and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me..."*

9. Jesus entered His public ministry and for **three** years he ministered, was tempted, but did not sin and God said of Him, "*...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased...*"
 - The lamb to be sacrificed to God had to be without blemish.
 - Jesus had passed the test and was indeed without blemish.

10. Then came Jesus' final week.
 - He was betrayed, sent to a mock trial, was condemned to death and then nailed to a cross.
 - He was suspended between heaven and earth between two thieves.
 - Darkness covered the earth for **THREE** hours.
 - Jesus' last words were the very same words the high priest shouted when he emerged from the holy place in the tabernacle after waiting **THREE** hours for the sacrifice to be approved and those words were: "**IT IS FINISHED!!!!**"
 - Jesus had come to die as a sacrifice for man's sins. His sacrifice had been accepted, **redemption was now complete.**

11. Jesus did not have to die. It was the love that God has for us/mankind that kept Jesus on the cross.
 - Others have died the same way, but none had God turning His back on them, leaving them alone, desolate to die.
 - God's justice demanded death of either the sinner **or a substitute. Blood was the offering.**

III. THE BLOOD OF JESUS' SACRIFICE WAS POWERFUL

1. *1 Peter 1:18-19*

2. Our salvation is not based on our merit, but God's mercy, not on our goodness, but upon God's grace.
 - His **blood** gives us peace with God. His **blood** reconciles us to God. His **blood** justifies us before God. His **blood** covers our sins - WHEN WE BELIEVE IN HIS SON.
 - "*...But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world...*" said Paul and so should we too.

3. The cross and nothing else shows the **depth** of man's sin, the **height** of God's love and the **breadth** of Jesus Christ's redemption.
 - Through the cross the way to God is now open to all people.
 - Because of what Jesus did, no longer do priests enter once a year into the holiest place for the sacrifice has already been made, **innocent blood has been shed, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many..."**

CONCLUSION:

1. Many have never gotten to visit the Holy Land and climb the mount of crucifixion or touch any holy things there, but every believer has been there before, twice....
 - We were there when our sins were used to nail Jesus to the cross.
 - We, who are believers, have been there again, to find redemption.

2. "**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?**"