

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: truthfortoday@aol.com

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Speaker: Mr. Jonathan Hughes

Precious Things in 1 Peter: The Precious Blood - 1 Peter 1:19

Working in a hospital laboratory, I handle over a thousand blood samples every day. Much of the testing that we do nowadays is so highly automated that all that is left for the lab staff to do is very routine. Once all the tests have been completed, the blood is stored for a few days before being thrown out and incinerated. What was once an integral part of the life of an individual has become worthless? Nothing much precious there then! However, a few months ago, Gerard Houllier was brought into hospital. The Liverpool football club manager was someone special, at least to half of Liverpool. When his blood samples arrived in the lab it always caused a bit of excitement, and an extra effort was made to ensure that the results were sent out quickly. The blood was precious because of whom it had come from. But with all the other blood samples, although the blood itself may not have been very precious, what the blood achieved was very precious. The joy of the parents as they find out they are to have their first child, the relief of the diabetic whose medication is now working; or the warning given in time that the patient with high blood pressure needs to reduce their cholesterol; all these point to the vital nature of the results of the tests that are performed. In this way, the blood is precious.

Today, as we continue our series of talks on precious things that Peter talks about, we shall consider the precious blood mentioned in chapter 1. As we do so, we shall consider how the blood is precious not only because of who it comes from, but also because of what the results of that blood are. We will read 1 Peter 1:18-20: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for you."

Firstly then, let us consider the preciousness of the person whose blood this is. To our sanitised, sophisticated modern way of life, all this talk about blood and sacrifice is vaguely unpleasant and a bit gory. And yet, to the Jewish audience to whom Peter was writing, they would have been only too familiar with the requirement for a blood sacrifice. Day by day, morning and evening, and then on special occasions, sacrifices were to be made. How else were sins to be forgiven? Had not God Himself instructed the people as to just how these sacrifices were to be made?

If we go back in time to a night in Egypt, when the Israelites were slaves to Pharaoh, then we might have heard the instruction to find a lamb. It was to be no ordinary lamb, however. It had to be an unblemished male lamb. Such an animal would be a rarity. Its value would reflect the fact that it was not to have any defect or deformity. But then, this lamb was to be taken and sacrificed and its blood was to be put upon the door-posts and upon the lintel. The blood was to be a sign over each house that inside were those who had obeyed God. For God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). So the great feast of Passover was instituted.

Passover marked the deliverance of the Israelites from the judgement of God and was to immediately precede their freedom from slavery in Egypt. Now what was given for the Israelites so long ago, finds its true fulfilment in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, we read, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." His death on the cross at Calvary not only fully sets us free from all the judgement of God that our sins deserved, but also sets us free from the power that sin exerts upon our lives. Christ alone could adequately claim to be that perfect sacrifice. In Him was no sin. He never sinned Himself. Satan had no inch of territory in His life, and He always did those things that pleased His Father. He went about doing good and four times Pilate had to declare, "I find no fault in this man." Uniquely, Christ could legitimately claim to be perfect.

And yet there is something more here. Have you ever wondered why the blood was only sprinkled upon the door posts and the lintel, not upon the doorstep also? One can almost imagine some overzealous father thinking that, if this was to ensure his son's safety, then he was going to splash it all around the door, just to make sure, in much the same spirit that Peter wanted to be washed all over, not just on his feet. Yet even in this picture of Christ's sacrifice, God is jealous to maintain the preciousness of the blood. On the door step, the blood was likely to be trampled underfoot. This blood, looking forward as it did to the blood of His one and only Son, was much too precious to be trampled upon. The blood of the Lord Jesus then is precious because of who He is.

But we must move on to look at our second reason for the value of His blood. In just the same way that, in the human body the blood is responsible for the maintenance of life, so the Bible speaks about many things that result from the blood of the Lord Jesus. This morning we shall look at just five of them.

1. Justified by His blood.

Romans 5:9 says, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Under our justice system, it is perfectly possible to be suspected of some offence and yet, due to insufficient evidence, not to be prosecuted for it. However, there is always the finger of suspicion hanging over the individual. Is it possible for the Christian ever to emerge from under this cloud of the guilt and suspicion of sin? Well yes, because of the blood of the Lord Jesus! When we trust in the Lord Jesus as our own personal Saviour, several things automatically happen. These things do not depend upon us one iota. One of these is that God justifies us. But what does it mean to be justified? It has been said that it is to be just – as if I'd never sinned. God now views me as if I had never sinned at all! What a marvellous state of affairs this is! Completely free from any debt I owed God for all of my sins. No longer answerable to God for all the wrong I have done.

Now this is undoubtedly all true but, however, is not the full meaning of justification. If I had never sinned then I would never die, I would go on living on earth forever. Because I have sinned, I will die, but because He has justified me, I am assured of eternal life in the Father's house. His blood covers all my sin and so God can righteously view me as without sin. In addition to this, I am fitted for eternal life in His presence. I remember once being sent on a course connected with my work. When I got there I felt really uncomfortable. I was surrounded by all these clever people who had years of experience, and their knowledge was so much greater than mine. I didn't really feel as if I fitted in there at all. There can be no question of any one of us feeling like this, though, when we are in heaven. The Psalmist could speak about “in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11), and later, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness” (Psalm 17:15). What a glorious prospect we have, as those who have believed in Him! It is all because His blood is not only the passport to allow us into heaven, but also fits us to be there.

2. Redemption through His blood.

Paul, in Ephesians 1:7, writes, “In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” Imagine standing out under the midday sun in a dusty and noisy slave market. All around you, the shouts of the bidders and the auctioneer compete with the cries of the slaves around you. Suddenly the bidding stops, and you realise that a price has been settled upon. You have been sold to the highest bidder. Reduced to the status of any other household object, you have been sold. Such must have been a common occurrence in Roman occupied Ephesus. Now, however, imagine that your new owner comes over to you and, breaking the chains that had been your only companion from childhood, you are set free. Not just cut loose, however, with nowhere to go and nothing to do, but taken back to your purchaser's home and welcomed into the family. By now, you might have been thinking that the sun had gone to your head! Such a turn of events was beyond the realms of wishful fantasy. And yet, this is exactly what is behind the scriptural idea of redemption.

It is not just that we have been purchased, that a price has been paid, but that we have been set free and become an integral part of the family of God. The price for our freedom was the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. His life was laid down that we might receive new life. We are no longer slaves to sin, unable to resist the desire to do wrong. He has bought us; we belong to Him now. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul says, “You are not your own, for you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Having paid the price for us, He has set us free to be part of the family.

Now the slave in our story, if he were to live a life of self seeking laziness, indulging himself at the expense of his host, would attract universal condemnation. How ungrateful, we might say. How little he deserved his good fortune. But before we too quickly condemn the ungrateful slave, let us first examine our own hearts and lives. Can I truly say that since I have been set free from my sin by the Lord Jesus I have served Him with anything more than half-heartedness? He has set us free; He does not command our obedience. Yet He deserves it, and it is upon this matter that we shall be assessed. What if my wife were to come home one day and say that from now on she would devote her Sundays to me, but for the rest of the week I would just have to make do without her? Or if she told me that she loved me, and then said how much she liked another man's face, or a third man's sense of humour. I would be worried; clearly something would be very wrong in our relationship.

So often, though, we treat our relationship with Jesus in just such a way. We can't see Him so we give Him our Sundays, but then we will flirt with our careers, or our hobbies, our money and our possessions. If He has bought us, then surely everything that we have belongs to Him. Now am I ready for this sort of radical relationship with Him? Fear of the untried keeps me from committing myself more wholly to Him, and maybe the goal is unattainable, for now, but I should never stop from working towards that closer relationship with Him.

3. Made near by His blood.

Ephesians 2:13, tells us, “But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.” Many Christians rightly look forward to the time when they shall be with the Lord Jesus in heaven, no longer to be apart from Him. It will truly be a wonderful time to see Him face to face, and then to be like Him. But Paul, here, says “now”. He does not look forward to a time of closeness; he sees it as a reality now! This thought is at the heart of the biblical word ‘reconciliation’. Unlike human conflict, where there is mutual enmity and dislike, we may have made God out as our enemy, but He has never been hostile towards us, not even when His Son was crucified. You will recall that when the Lord died, the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. That great visible barrier that marked out the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God was torn down. There was no longer to be any division between God and man. Had God lowered His standards, or had man improved? Not at all! But the blood of Jesus had fully satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God, for our good. There will not be another sacrifice for our sins and so we are now able to draw as close to God as we will ever be able to do. It is by daily making time for prayer and reading His word that the fullness of that relationship can be enjoyed. If I never spend any time with my wife, then I can hardly complain if our marriage does not seem all that special.

4. Peace through His blood.

Colossians 1:20 says, “And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself – by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.” We live in a world that knows so little of lasting peace. Whether on the international or national level, at work or in the home, so much of life seems to consist of problems and strife. As Christians, we have something gloriously positive to show to the world. His blood is able to bring peace to any situation. In the most trying of circumstances, it is possible to be completely at peace. No wonder Peter could sleep like a baby the night before his expected execution (see Acts 12)! There are times when we may experience this peace quite unexpectedly. However, often, this may be something that needs to be a conscious decision. Having brought a particular circumstance or problem to the Lord in prayer, leave it there. Do we truly believe the promise that God is able to work all things to the good of those who love Him? The peace that we can experience on a daily basis stems from the fact that His blood has made our peace with God. Because we know the God of peace we can have peace with God, and in our day by day lives we enjoy the peace of God. God does not promise the Christian an easy life with no problems. In fact, the opposite is true. However, He does promise His presence with us, and the strength to meet all our circumstances with the knowledge that He will provide all that we need.

5. Boldness by the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:19 tells us, “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus.” What, during Old Testament times, was the privilege of the High Priest only once a year, is now the privilege of every believer, daily. The way has been made for us to come into the very presence of God. Whether individually, or on behalf of others, it is the right, and responsibility, of each believer, in accordance with what the Bible teaches elsewhere, to act as a priest, through prayer and praise. There must have been godly Jews throughout the Old Testament times who would have secretly longed for the opportunity to go into the Holy of Holies. But they knew that that was an impossible dream. God just could not be approached that way. It meant certain and immediate death. How dare we take such a privilege then for granted! Do we ever arrive at the Lord’s Supper, for example, with nothing to offer Him? Are we ever too busy during a day to be unavailable to enter into the presence of the King of kings? Perhaps you have known an occasion in your own life when you have waited for someone to come, only for them not to turn up, for one reason or another. It must cause enormous pain to the heart of our heavenly Father when we do not make the most of the privilege that we have of access into His presence.

We have seen, this morning, why Scripture speaks about the precious blood. Precious because of who it comes from. Precious because of what it achieves. Hebrews 10:4, speaks about the futility of the blood of all the animal sacrifices that had been made. The blood of Jesus alone stands as all we need, for salvation, for life, for eternity. No wonder Frances Havergal could write in her hymn:

*Precious, precious blood of Jesus,
Shed on Calvary;
Shed for rebels, shed for sinners,
Shed for me!*

If you have not done so before, make sure this morning that you trust in His precious blood as sufficient for your salvation.

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