

## [Leviticus 17:11](#)

### **The Blood Makes The Difference**

#### **Introduction**

Have any of you given blood? Blood makes the difference between life and death. Just ask a cancer patient or someone that's had a serious injury. Without blood, all flesh-bearing creatures will die. On a much more grand and eternal scale, Jesus' blood makes the difference between life and death. We sing about it, we remember it when we have communion at the Lord's Table and we read about it in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, one of the priest's duties was to sacrifice animals and their blood was poured out or sprinkled on the altar in the tabernacle. The purpose was to make atonement for the sins of the people. Atonement is defined as to bring into one accord or to make amends. It's important to realize that the blood of animals couldn't make atonement for sins perfectly or once and for all. Only Jesus can do that.

From a biblical viewpoint, atonement is defined as the reconciliation of God and man through Christ. This is achieved only by the blood of Christ in His perfect sacrifice through His death on the cross. The Lord Jesus' blood was shed to atone for the sins of mankind. Christ's perfect blood made the perfect sacrifice to appease God's hatred of sin. Jesus died in the place of sinful man, receiving the full wrath of God's punishment for sin, so that sinners like you and me could live. A person who trusts Jesus, embracing these truths through God's grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone, is safe and secure from sin and death, now and for all eternity. That's the gospel, the good news message of the cross.

Therefore, the main theme of this message is that only Jesus' blood makes the difference for atonement of sins. I will attempt to expound upon this theme with the following three (3) points which describes the perfect, sacrificial blood of Jesus as:

- life-giving
- a gift of God
- only atonement for sin

#### **Historical Background**

The book of Leviticus, written by Moses sometime from 1400-1450 B.C., is one of the first five books of the Old Testament, commonly called the Pentateuch. Leviticus is not so much a book about the keeping of the law for righteousness, but rather a confirmation that God is holy. Because God is holy, sin needs to be atoned for.

Therefore, God ordained "the Day of Atonement" ([Leviticus 23:26-32](#).) This is an important Jewish holiday, also known as Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement occurred only once a year ([Leviticus 16:34](#)) and was an annual "cleaning house" of sin. The Day of Atonement was a way of ensuring the people's sins were dealt with, so that God continued dwelling in their midst.

God graciously provided atonement for sin through the shedding of blood of animal sacrifices. But God in His infinite wisdom and understanding pointed ahead, a foreshadowing, to the cross and the perfect blood of Jesus that would be the atonement for sins. He gave it for you and for me so that sin would be forgiven. In fact, here's what [Hebrews 9:22b](#) says about that.

*...and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*  
[Heb 9:22b](#) (ESV)

As mentioned earlier, without blood, flesh-bearing creatures will die. Without the atoning blood of Christ Jesus, spirit-filled creatures, people made in the image of God, people with souls like us, will die. There would be no hope in this earthly life or beyond. That brings us to the first point of this message, which is the blood of Christ is life-giving - that life being eternal.

### **1. Jesus' Blood - Life-Giving**

For the life of the flesh is in the blood ([Leviticus 17:11](#)). The word "life" in this verse can also be translated "soul", which alludes to very inner nature of the creature created by God. The soul is the part of all flesh that is the very source and fountain of life. Therefore, we see that the blood of the sacrifice is sacred and precious. That is why God prohibited the eating of blood. This is referenced in [Leviticus 17:10](#), [12](#) and [14](#). For example, here's what God says in [verse 14](#).

*For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.*  
[Lev 17:14](#) (ESV)

The blood is indeed sacred, precious and life-giving. Jesus says that He came that we may have life and have it abundantly ([John 10:10](#)). He also says that He is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him ([John 14:6](#)). This life is eternal and is a gracious gift from God for all those who trust in Jesus ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). This also means the life-giving blood of Jesus makes the difference for people like you and me.

For example, the reason the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper was to provide a time for the church to gather together and remember and celebrate Him. Eating the bread and drinking the cup, which represents Jesus' body and blood, is a proclamation of trust and belief in Him. He's the only One who calls sinners out of the darkness of sin and into His marvelous light ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). God's perfect love was poured out in the blood of Jesus on the cross. He laid down His life for sinners, so that people like us could live. In fact, take a look at what [John 15:13](#) says.

*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*  
[John 15:13](#) (ESV)

On January 13, 1982, a commercial jet crashed just after takeoff in the Potomac River near Washington, D.C. Six survivors managed to cling to a section of the aircraft's tail in the icy waters. A helicopter dispatched to the accident dropped a life-line for each surviving passenger, one at a time. And each time, one of the survivors, Arland Williams Jr., would hand the life-line

to another passenger. On the final pass, the helicopter's life-line was dropped to Mr. Williams, but he was gone. He had given his life, so that others would live.

This heroic act in a desperate situation is a tiny picture of the gospel. Someone laid down his life so that others could live. Jesus laid down His life so that others like you and me could live eternally. Sin causes all of us to be in a desperate situation and only Jesus' blood makes the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

Because Jesus' blood gives life - eternal life - where is your and my hope of being rescued from a certain death in the deep waters of sin and judgment? Do we find our hope in money, possessions, jobs or even ministry? Or is our hope found in nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness? There is no gift greater than the life-giving blood of Jesus, which brings us to the second point - the blood is a gift of God.

## **2. Jesus' Blood - A Gift of God**

In [Leviticus 17:11](#), God's states the following about the blood of atonement: "I have given it [blood] for you on the altar..." We need to pay particular attention to the word "given" and the words "for you on the altar". The word "given" implies that the blood that atones for sin is a gift. Now, a gift is given freely from the giver to the receiver out of care, compassion and love. That's who God is. He gives good gifts and perfect gifts out of His great care, compassion and love. This truth never changes because He never changes ([James 1:17](#), [Hebrews 13:8](#)).

Now, take a look at the words "for you on the altar". The words "for you" indicate that God's gift is very personal because He gave it to His people, the ones who belong to Him. In addition, the location of where it was given, "on the altar", means the blood was a sacrifice. This ties in with the high priest sacrificing the blood of bulls, goats and sheep on the altar on the Day of Atonement ([Leviticus 16:18](#)).

There's something very important for us to apprehend concerning the blood that atoned for the sins of God's people. The gift of atoning blood was given freely through God's grace. But God's gift of grace isn't free. A price was paid. That price for atonement under the Old Covenant, which God made with His people at Mount Sinai, was the shedding of blood of animal sacrifices ([Hebrews 9:18-22](#)). However, the blood of animals was insufficient to cover the sins of the people, which is cited in [Hebrews 10:4](#).

*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*  
[Heb 10:4](#) (ESV)

The Old Testament saints knew the blood of animals sacrificed on the Day of Atonement or any other time couldn't save them from their sins. They looked ahead to the cross, trusting God that the sacrifice of animals was a foreshadowing of the better and perfect sacrifice of Jesus' blood ([Hebrews 9:11-14](#)). We look back to the cross, also trusting God that the blood of Jesus is the only way to peace with God and forgiveness of sins ([Colossians 1:20](#), [Ephesians 1:7](#)).

This brings us back to the main theme of this message, which is that only Jesus' blood makes the difference for the atonement of sins. No one or nothing can bring about the reconciliation of God

and man except the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other cure for the sickness of sin, except through the life-giving, God-given gift of the blood of Christ. There is power in the blood of Christ, which is described in the refrain of the old hymn "There Is Power In the Blood".

*There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the blood of the Lamb;  
There is power, power, wonder working power  
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

God uses the imagery of a slain lamb in Scripture ([Revelation 5:12](#)) to give us a picture that points to Jesus' sacrificial death. For example, the Passover lamb was slaughtered according to God's plan and its blood was put on the door posts of the Israelite's homes ([Exodus 12:1-13](#)). The lamb was sacrificed by a painful death so that God's wrath would pass over His people. The Hebrew people were ransomed by the precious blood of the lamb. The blood of the lamb made the difference.

Jesus is the Lamb of God. According to God's plan, Jesus was sacrificed by a painful death so that God's wrath would pass over His people, people like you and me. His blood is the ransom, the payment to God, which sets us free from sin. The blood of the Lamb of God made the difference. Therefore, there is no need any more for animal sacrifices because Jesus' sacrifice is the perfect and complete gift of God. Here's a truth that is very important for us to remember. This gift of being ransomed from the curse of sin through the blood of Christ only had to be done once and its efficacy is for all eternity ([John 1:29](#), [1 Peter 1:18-19](#), [Hebrews 9:12](#)).

That kind of outrageous, gracious, merciful, gift-giving comes from God who delights in His Son, with whom He is well pleased. Yes, He delights in the One who bought His people with His precious blood. If you're in Christ, God delights in you because of Jesus. Yes, if you're in Christ, God loves you as much as He loves His Son ([John 17:23b](#)). Did you ever think about that? Indeed, God delights in those who have received His gift of the precious, atoning blood of Christ. Yes, God delights in the person who loves Him and puts their hope in Him. Here's [Psalm 147:11](#).

*...but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.*  
[Psalms 147:11](#) (ESV)

And that brings us to the third and final point of this message. The blood that brings eternal life through Christ, which is so graciously and mercifully given as a gift by God, is the only means of atonement for sin.

### **3. Jesus' Blood - Only Means of Atonement**

[Leviticus 17:11](#) points toward Christ when it states "for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." There is no other way for sins to be atoned for, except through the blood of Jesus. This is what the New Covenant is all about, which we read about in Scripture. Specifically here's what [Matthew 26:28](#) says about that.

*...for this is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. [Matt 26:28](#) (ESV)*

The New Covenant was established when Jesus' sacrifice on the cross occurred. His blood was the permanent, perfect atonement for sin, once and for all, unlike the animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, every year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. He would approach the Ark of the Covenant ([Exodus 25:10-22](#)), which was the ornate, gold box symbolizing God's faithfulness to keep His covenant. The high priest would sprinkle the blood of an animal sacrifice on the lid of the ark, the "mercy seat", to show atonement for sin had been made. The sacrificial blood covered the people's sins by coming between them and the holy God.

If our sins are to be atoned for, something has to come between us and God. That "something" is the blood of the perfect sacrifice acceptable to God; it is the blood of Christ. Jesus is our "Mercy Seat". His precious blood made the difference as the only means of atonement because it cleanses us from all sin. Here's what Scripture says about that in [1 John 1:7b](#).

*...and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*  
[1 John 1:7](#) (ESV)

So, only the sin-cleansing blood of Jesus will do in order that a person's sins be atoned for and there be reconciliation with God. There is no one else that can accomplish this exclusive, incredible, life-transforming miracle, except Jesus.

In C. S. Lewis' book titled, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, he paints a beautiful picture of the exclusivity of Jesus being the only One who can make the difference in a hopeless situation. At the White Witch's castle, there were dozens of people and animals that had been turned into statues of stone by the Witch. Aslan, the lion, breathed on them and they came to life. Only Aslan accomplished this transformation of lifeless, hard, stone figures to living, breathing creatures with flesh.

Similarly, only the atoning blood of Jesus can transform a lifeless, hard, stony heart to a soft, life-filled, heart of flesh. Let's see what God states about this in [Ezekiel 36:26](#).

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*  
[Ezek 36:26](#) (ESV)

### **Call to Examine Ourselves**

What's the condition of your heart, your soul, the part of you that God provided a way for atonement of sins through Jesus' sacrificial blood? Are you hard and stone-cold to the gospel? If so, you're in a desperate life-or-death situation. Jesus is the only One who can make the difference. He's the only way of salvation ([Acts 4:12](#)) and He's the only way to eternal life ([John 14:6](#)).

Did the survivors in the Potomac River plane crash say “no thank you” when Mr. Williams passed the life-line to them? No! Who would? Today, God is offering the life-line of hope, peace and assurance of eternal life as a gift through the atoning blood of Christ. If you've rejected the message of the cross, your life can be changed right now by repenting of sin, believing the gospel and trusting Jesus. Today is the day; now is the time; won't you trust Him?

And how about those of us who have trusted Jesus for many years, perhaps decades. Do we realize that His blood not only atoned for our sin, but continues to plead our case in everyday, real-life situations? Because of Jesus' blood, a marriage on the rocks can be rescued. A serious health problem can be healed. Worry-filled thoughts can be calmed. Whatever your or my situation is, we need to repent of our sins, believe the gospel and trust that Jesus' blood will make the difference.

### **Conclusion**

There's an old hymn titled "Nothing But the Blood", which has the following words: "This is all my hope and peace - nothing but the blood of Jesus; this is all my righteousness - nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh, precious is the flow that makes me white as snow; no other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus." Is that the heart-felt cry of we who gather at La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC)? Do you and I trust in nothing but the blood of Jesus?

If we do, it should cause us to drop to our knees in prayer for the Holy Spirit to bring revival like the church has never seen. Revival is messy and hard because it brings outrageous gospel-centered changes. For example, when God ignites the fire of revival, we begin loving Jesus more and ourselves less. We serve in love and love to serve. From there, radical changes continue. Fostered by the Holy Spirit's prompting, love grows deeper and richer within families, especially between husbands and wives. Love grows deeper within the church and for other people around us. In fact, the apprehension of Jesus' love for us would be so evident, that it would compel us to an urgent and passionate desire for prayer, both individually and as a faith-family. This is who Jesus wants us to be as His followers! Are you and I willing to ask God for revival for the sake of His glory and our good? And if not, why not?

In conclusion, have you noticed the words - connect, grow, serve - in the remodeled foyer of the LEFC church building? Those words should be more than a slogan. Those words should spur us on to seek God's face through prayer for reviving our love for Jesus. That He would ignite a fire in our hearts to be bold ambassadors for Christ; proclaiming the gospel to a dying, chaotic and sin-filled world. And the reason for it all? Nothing else but the life-giving, God-given gift of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus making the difference. Amen.