

We bow our hearts in prayer: Lord, help us to believe that **the blood of Jesus [Your] Son cleanses us from all sin.** Amen. ^(1John1:7)

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Do you ever contemplate that simple introduction at all? “Dear Fellow Redeemed.”

Think about it for a moment. What does a pastor mean when he uses it?

It’s rather different than, “Dear Friends in Christ,” isn’t it?

After all, some in the congregation at any given time might not consider themselves friends of the pastor.

And if they are not Christian, if they are not “in Christ,” then this greeting is not for them.

As friendly as “Dear Friends in Christ” might sound, it is an exclusive greeting, inviting only certain people to listen, while leaving others out as strangers.

Is that the same with “Dear Fellow Redeemed”? Is anyone excluded in this greeting?

Has Christ redeemed only some, and not others?

Or has He paid the price of forgiveness of all people with His holy, precious blood?

Yes, for all people, for the one preaching, for you, and everyone else in this room,

for everyone out there, for all people the world round, regardless of their current beliefs.

Whether one recognizes or rejects Jesus’ sacrifice, his debt is already paid, he is redeemed.

Let us listen now to what God, through His inspired writer to the Hebrews says to you,

His redeemed.

Our text for meditation...

... *We read as follows in Jesus’ name:*

Therefore [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

How do those words sit with you?

Perhaps, if you have been a Christian for a while, you are used to hearing things like this.

It may seem rather elementary and basic, foundational to being a Christian, and it is.

But perhaps it’s something that you don’t dwell on much anymore when you hear it.

This isn’t necessarily bad. It means that you have heard it before, and often.

It means that you have been well-catechized and have heard the Gospel proclaimed to you.

On the other hand, perhaps you haven’t heard it very often, and the thought of it seems gruesome.

Or perhaps, you have heard it often and the picture sticks in your mind and you find it distracting, or even disturbing.

And that isn't necessarily bad either, because it keeps the seriousness of Jesus' sacrifice for you more in focus.

It is one more obstacle for your conscience to treat your forgiveness with contempt.

...

Our text talks about two covenants, an old and a new.

The old covenant was given, as indicated, through the mediator, Moses. This was at Mt. Sinai.

There, the Lord, after redeeming His son, Israel, by the blood of the Passover lamb and bringing them through the wilderness to Mt. Sinai, declared them to be His people.

He cut a covenant with them, and sealed it in the blood of calves and goats.

Those things that were sprinkled with that blood (the tent, the vessels used in worship, the book (of the covenant), the people)... these were all declared to be purified and holy.

Now that's a picture that just doesn't sit well with us today, does it?

It's not hygienic. Things are not normally considered clean when they have blood sprinkled on them.

In fact, they are stained and needing to be disinfected, right?

And there's a tendency, a temptation(?), for us to think of these OT rites as barbaric... primitive... because they used animal sacrifices. Something that is, to us, archaic.

All that death seemed so unnecessary, since animal blood has no intrinsic purifying power.

as Hebrews also said, **For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.** ^(10:4)

But you ought not forget that Israel's sacrificial code was not something that they developed, but something that God gave to them.

The daily and annual killing of the sacrificial animals was a constant reminder of the sacrifice of the coming Messiah and Savior.

Real living animals were sacrificed. They had to die, to give up their lives even though they were innocent of the crimes and sins that those who offered them had committed.

The blood spilt and caught and thrown and sprinkled was not metaphorical, but real blood, just as the blood of the real Savior, a true man, would be shed for the people of the world.

Again, the blood of bulls, goats, & lambs was never intrinsically purifying or able to make one holy.

If it were, then Kosher slaughter houses would be the most holy places on earth.

But because the Word of God was connected to the blood of these particular divinely-instituted sacrifices, they had power to cleanse, forgive sins, and make people and things holy, just as the water in Baptism *is not just water, but water used according to God's command and connected with His Word, and therefore able to effect forgiveness of sins, deliver from death and the devil and give eternal salvation to all who believe this.* (Small Catechism: Nature and Power of Baptism)

But the OT rites and sacrifices were never intended to be the final covenant.

They all and only anticipated the new and final covenant, with a new Mediator, Jesus Christ.

But Jesus was more than just the Mediator, the One declaring it from God to us,

He Himself would also be the sacrifice.

His sacrifice was not just to be a living sacrifice, offering a life of perfection on your behalf;

He was to be, as so many animals were before Him, sacrificed in death; His blood spilt.

This was necessary for **The wages of sin is death.** (Romans6:23)

For the debt of sin to be paid in full, death had to occur. Those wages had to be paid.

But not just any death would do, the sacrifice would have to be innocent of all offenses,
yet completely accountable for them.

He would have to be joined with humanity itself, one with us.

This would give His blood intrinsic value, being that it is human blood,
for God **made man in His own image**, as He says in Genesis ^(9:6).

And yet the blood of only 1 regular man, would only have value to redeem the sin of only 1 man.

But Jesus is not just a regular man, He is also God, and so His blood,
not only being intrinsically valuable, it is also infinitely valuable, able to cover all sins of all man.

This blood of the true the Passover Lamb was shed on the altar of the cross;

the blood struck on the lintel and post of wood, to redeem His children from their bondage to sin.

The Lord Himself has passed your judgment upon Jesus and passes over you in safety.

This is given to you in Jesus' new testament, declared to you at His last Supper.

There He testified that His *true body and blood* are given *under the bread and wine*,
for the forgiveness of sins, *for us Christians to eat and to drink.* (Small Cat.: Nature of Sac. O/Altar)

That this last and new testament is true, Hebrews says, **For where a will is involved,
the death of the one who made it must be established.**

Just as the previous, old testament had been **inaugurated with blood**,

so Jesus Himself instituted this testament saying: "**this cup is the New Testament in My blood,
which is shed for you for the remission of sins.**"

This is completely in line with the last line of our text,

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

So we see that a bloody sacrifice is not barbaric, or primitive, or archaic.

It is still necessary. The only difference is that it has already been completed, once for all,
as it is written, **He entered once for all into the holy places,**

**not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood,
thus securing an eternal redemption.** ^(Hebrews9:12)

So it is good, right, and salutary for us to confess with Luther's explanation

That Jesus *has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me...*

not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death.

And unlike the blood of the goats and the calves which was part of the corruption of this world,
dead and starting to decay as soon as it was spilt,

Christ's blood is not the blood of the dead, but of the living, resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ.

This blood truly does purify and cleanse one of sin.

And so the Lord makes it available to you regularly, here at His altar.

Regularly calling you to receive Jesus body and blood for the forgiveness of sins,
and *where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.* Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria