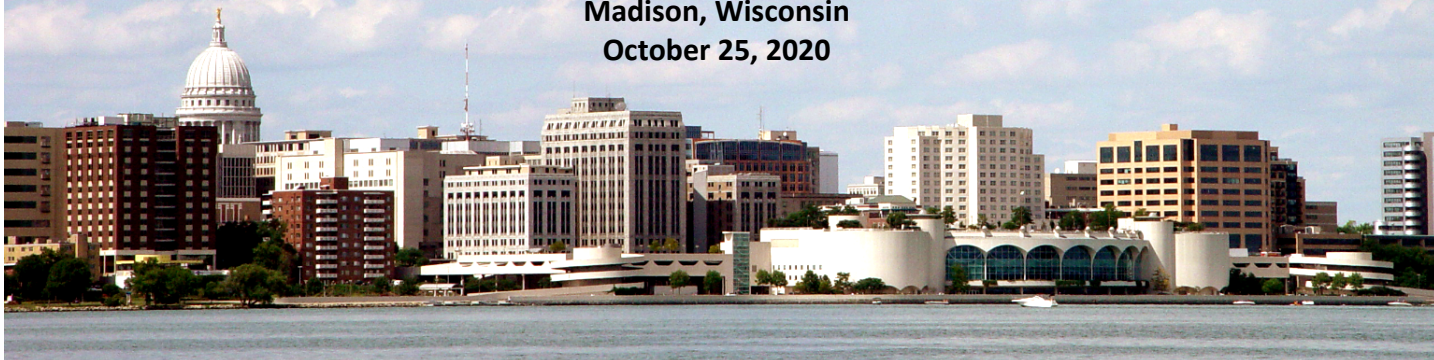


Jesus' Blood Applied

**Baxter T. Exum (#1567)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
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****COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE****

It's a blessing to be with you this morning! It is good to be back! I am thankful for the opportunity to be away, and I am very thankful to the good brothers who filled in with the preaching and teaching responsibilities in my absence. It was good to see my sister for a bit, and it was good to spend some time in nature. Just a few quick comments on that: Most of you know she moved to Port Angeles, Washington, about five years ago. Port Angeles is almost 2 hours straight west of Seattle. She is a therapist, a mental-health counselor, and has her own practice. Due to COVID, she's been meeting with clients on a covered patio over the past seven months, and I helped her set up a propane fire pit so she can continue outdoors as the weather gets cooler. While I was out there, we did quite a bit of hiking together. And I did even more hiking when she was at work every day. This was taken in the middle of a hike along the Gray Wolf River on my first Saturday there. Some of you know she volunteers for the Clallam County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team out there. Well, that first Saturday night, I went back to my campsite to recover, and when I woke up around 4:30 the next morning, she sent me a text, "Are you awake?" After our hike, just as she was getting ready to go to bed Saturday night, she got called out on a search and rescue call at 9:30 p.m. They had to go looking for a mushroom picker out near Forks. Forks is where the Twilight movies were filmed. It is a remote and spooky place! The whole area is a rain forest. Anyway, they found the woman around 2 a.m., my sister led the team, and she did not get home until around 4:30 Sunday morning. In her text, she told me she was just getting home, that she was hoping to sleep for a few hours, and would see me at worship in a little bit. Anyway, she has told me before that mushroom pickers are the worst! They go out looking for mushrooms, they go from one shroom to the next, they wander far off the path, and when they look up it is dark, they are completely unprepared, and they have no idea where they are. Thankfully, the woman was still alive, but they had to machete their way through the rainforest to get to her. In the foreground, that is my sister, at least the side of her head! I told her that at least they got her good side in the newspaper. But, I am thankful for my sister, for the good work she does, and for the time I got to spend with her over the past two weeks.

As usual, I hope all of you have the elements for the Lord's Supper today, either from home or on the table in the entryway. We plan on partaking of the Supper immediately after we study the word of God. And following the Supper, we plan on singing one song, "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus" (#454), before we head outside to do our socializing in the great outdoors. It is important that we head outside immediately after singing.

As our custom has been, we are starting our study today with a summary of God's plan for our salvation. God sent his only Son to this earth to live as one of us and to offer himself as a sacrifice in our place. We respond to God's gracious gift by believing the message, by turning away from sin, by publicly confessing our faith in Jesus as the Christ, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with him in baptism for the forgiveness of sins. At that point, the Christian life begins, and we live for him. And once again, we have several examples. The first comes from Alfred Beyan, a gospel preacher in Liberia. He's pictured here, baptizing Dacontee. We rejoice with Dacontee this morning.

The next pictures come from Mark Landis, who preaches in the Philippines. He reports that a husband and wife, 62 years old, have both obeyed the gospel after a series of studies. We have pictures of Lolito and Lorita up here. I love seeing the cargo ship in the background. But we are thankful for Lolito and Lorita and their decision to obey the gospel.

And the next pictures also come from Mark (in the Philippines), as he also recently baptized Anisito Terana (who is 70 years old) along with his granddaughter, Mariet Terana. They started studying about a week ago and had their second study this past Tuesday. They could not wait to be baptized so Mark went and completed two more studies with them right away, and they were baptized immediately. What a blessing for a grandfather and his granddaughter to be baptized at the same time. This morning, then, we rejoice with Anisito and Mariet, and we are thankful to have these pictures by way of example – what these people have done over the past week or so, you can do this morning. If you have any questions, if you would like to study the scriptures, please get in touch.

This morning, we return to our series of lessons on BLOOD. We started several weeks ago with an overview of blood in the Bible, and we are studying this in response to a request from two of our members who have been joining us on the telephone every week. As you might remember, one of our members had a blood transfusion a while back, and that got them thinking about the importance of blood in the Bible. So, a few weeks ago, we started with an overview of those 400+ references to blood in the word of God.

We learned that life is in the blood, we learned that blood is a substitute, and we learned that blood has been used to seal or ratify covenants. And as we closed that first study, we noted that this framework from the Old Testament merely foreshadows what was coming with the sacrifice of God's Son.

Then, a few weeks ago, we continued by looking very specifically at the blood of Jesus. And as we studied, we discovered that the blood of Jesus FORGIVES, it WASHES OR CLEANSSES, it REDEEMS, it RECONCILES (or brings together), and it also SANCTIFIES, as well as JUSTIFIES.

This is good news, isn't it! Jesus died on the cross, shedding his blood for the forgiveness of sins. This is God's offer of salvation in a nutshell. This is the message, this is the good news, that is to be preached to the whole world – the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But does this mean that all people will be saved? Unfortunately, the answer is "No." And the reason is: The blood of Jesus was poured out for all people, but it must be properly applied. The blood of Jesus must be applied as God has directed.

We understand this in other areas. We understand that any cure, in order to be effective, needs to be properly applied. If the doctor tells me to take two aspirin, can I duct tape those pills to my forehead and expect my headache to go away? It's the right medicine, but it has not been properly applied. If I get a cut on my hand, can I fix that wound by eating a Band-Aid? Is that how that works? Imagine going to the ER, "I had this cut, I ate the Band-Aid, but it just wouldn't stop bleeding." They would be keeping me at UW Hospital for other reasons! If I

go to the ER with aspirin duct taped to my forehead, a headache or the cut on my hand would be the least of my problems! For a cure to be effective, it needs to be properly applied.

We think back to the original Passover and the blood of the lamb that had to be spread on the doorposts and on the lintels on the homes of the children of Israel. That blood had to be applied just as God had directed. They could have painted it on a wall, they could have poured it out on the floor, they could have dug a trench around their home and filled the trench with blood (like a moat), but that's not what God had commanded! No, in order for the angel of the Lord to pass over their homes, they had to apply the blood just as God had directed.

Imagine this: If the soldiers at the cross had rubbed the blood of Jesus all over their bodies, would that have forgiven those men for what they had done? What if they in some way had been able to drink some of it? Would their sins have been forgiven? In the same way, "No!" In order for the blood of Jesus to save, it needs to be applied as God has directed. And this brings us back this morning to the act of baptism. The gospel is the good news concerning the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. We obey the gospel by turning away from sin (by dying to sin) and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Jesus in baptism – we are dipped under water and then raised up as we reenact the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord poured out his blood in his death on the cross, and as Paul explains in Romans 6,

...all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death[?]. Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.

Baptism, therefore, is how the blood of Jesus is applied – a burial in water for the forgiveness of sins. Many in the religious world, though, have tried to change this. We see religious groups sprinkling newborn babies, we see other religious groups claiming that we are saved by praying the "sinner's prayer," a prayer never found in the Bible. We see others claiming that baptism isn't necessary at all. All of these are merely examples of duct taping aspirin to your forehead. These are all examples of eating Band-Aids.

This morning, then, in the time we have left, I'd like for us to consider a series of scriptures laid out in chart form, where we examine what the blood of Jesus and the act of baptism have in common. And we're studying in this way to try to answer the objection that we are saved by Jesus' blood, not baptism. Because, based on Scripture, we're about to discover that it's not a matter of choosing between the two. But instead, we're about to learn that baptism is how we APPLY the blood of Jesus. We are saved by his blood, but only when we apply the blood of Jesus just as God has directed.

So, on this chart, as we move forward, we'll be looking at what the blood of Jesus and baptism have in common. We won't have room on the screen to put the actual quotes up here, only the references. So, I would strongly encourage you to write these down and look them up as we move through this. It's important for us to understand what Jesus' blood and baptism have in common.

I. And we start with the FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

And the first passage here is a passage we just briefly alluded to several weeks ago, and it's tied to the Lord's Supper – Matthew 26:27-28. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus takes a cup, and when he had given

thanks, he gave it to the apostles saying, ***“Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”*** What I want us to notice here is that Jesus’ blood is poured out for many ***“for forgiveness of sins.”*** His blood brings forgiveness. Let’s keep that phrase in mind, ***“for forgiveness of sins.”*** And let’s move over to Acts 2:38, a passage telling us what happens just seven weeks after the Lord’s resurrection. Jesus has ascended back into heaven, thousands of people have come together at the temple in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, and the apostle Peter stands up to speak, along with the rest of the apostles. They are speaking in multiple languages to people who have come together from all over the world. Peter explains: You people have murdered the Son of God. And in response, the people are pierced to the heart, so they interrupt Peter’s sermon and say, ***“Brethren, what shall we do?”*** And in Acts 2:38 Peter responds and tells them what to do, as he says to them, ***“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*** Do we see what the blood of Jesus and baptism have in common? The Lord’s blood was poured out for many ***“for forgiveness of sins,”*** and Peter tells all of us to repent and be baptized ***“for the forgiveness of your sins.”*** The same phrase is used in both passages!

So, which is it? Are our sins forgiven by Jesus’ blood, or are our sins forgiven in the act of baptism? The answer is, “Yes!” Our sins are forgiven by the Lord’s blood, at the moment we submit to his command to repent and be baptized. Those who would try to force us to make a choice between the two are abusing the scriptures. Jesus’ blood forgives, but baptism is the point at which forgiveness takes place. His blood is the HOW, and baptism is the WHEN and WHERE. Baptism is the point at which we come into contact with the Lord’s blood. His blood is applied in the act of baptism.

II. As we move on, let’s look at SALVATION.

The first passage here is Romans 5:9, and to give just a bit of context, I’ll include verses 8-10. Notice, please, what Paul writes in Romans 5:8-10. He says,

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

We don’t have time to look at this in depth, but I do want us to notice that with reference to the death of Christ, we are justified by his blood and we are ***“SAVED”*** from the wrath of God through Him. We are saved by the blood of Jesus; we are saved by his blood that was poured out on the cross.

So, keeping that in mind, let’s move over to the BAPTISM column, and let’s also look at Mark 16:16. This is a passage that’s probably pretty familiar to most of us. It’s a part of what we commonly refer to as the “Great Commission,” spoken by Jesus to the apostles after his resurrection and right before his ascension back into heaven. In Mark 16:16, Jesus says, ***“He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”*** So here, we notice that whoever has believed and has been baptized shall be ***“SAVED.”*** Baptism is associated with salvation.

But wait a minute! I thought according to Romans 5:9 we are saved by Jesus’ blood. Which is it? Are we saved by his blood or are we saved by baptism? And once again, the answer is, “Yes!” We are saved by Jesus’ blood, and we are also saved at the point of baptism. His blood is the HOW, and baptism is the WHEN.

III. Let's keep moving to the next reference, the CLEANSING OF THE CONSCIENCE.

The first reference comes in Hebrews 9:13-14. It seems we've spent some time in Hebrews lately, and that's alright. Notice, please, the reference to the blood of Christ and what it does in Hebrews 9:13-14,

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

So, we find here that the blood of Jesus is able to "***cleanse your conscience.***" What does that have to do with baptism? Well, let's look at the reference on the other side of the chart, 1 Peter 3:21. In 1 Peter 3:20, Peter refers to the great flood and how Noah and his family were brought safely through the water, and then he picks up in 1 Peter 3:21, and he says, "***Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.***" So, we have baptism described as "***an appeal to God for a good conscience.***" Baptism is our way of calling out to God for a good conscience. It is God's way for us to call out to him for a good conscience. But wait! I thought the blood of Christ cleanses our conscience! Which one is it? Is our conscience made clean by the blood of Jesus or through the act of baptism? The answer, of course, is, "Yes!" Our conscience is made clean by the blood of Jesus, this is the HOW. But the WHEN is at the point of baptism. His blood makes our conscience clean, but it happens when we obey the gospel, when we call out to him in the act of baptism. So once again, baptism and Jesus' blood are linked together.

IV. Let's look at the fourth concept here, the idea of being IN CHRIST.

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul refers to being "***in Christ***" or "***in Him***" in various ways at least a dozen times. It's an emphasis in Ephesians. We want to be in Christ as opposed to being out of Christ. We want to be in the church, the body of Christ. Well, in Ephesians 2:13, Paul says, "***But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***" The blood of Jesus, then, has something to do with us being "***in Christ***" as opposed to out of Christ. We want to be in Jesus, and we find in this passage that the blood of Jesus puts us "***in Christ.***"

But let's also move over and notice what Paul writes in Galatians 3:26-28, and let's notice what he says about being "***in Christ.***" In Galatians 3:26-28, Paul says, "***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***" I hope all of us understand what Paul is saying here. He's writing to Christians, and he's explaining that there was a time in the past when we were "***baptized into Christ.***" He compares baptism to putting on Christ, just as we might put on a piece of clothing. In baptism, we put on Jesus. In baptism, we surround ourselves with the Lord. We are baptized "***into his death***" (as Paul explained in our first passage today from Romans 6). So once again, which is it? Does the blood of Jesus put us in Christ? Or does baptism put us in Christ? And once again, the answer is, "Yes!" The blood of Jesus is the HOW, and baptism is the WHEN. Baptism is the point where we move from outside the Lord to inside the Lord, and we want to be on the inside.

V. The final connection between baptism and the blood of Jesus is the idea of WASHING.

And the first passage here is the reference in Revelation 7:14. In verse 13, one of the elders in the vision is asking John, ***“These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”*** And in verse 14, John replies and says to him, ***“My lord, you know.”*** And the elder says to John, ***“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”*** So, in this picture, we have the blood of the Lamb associated with the washing of robes, as those robes are “made white in the blood of the Lamb.” So, the blood of Jesus washes.

Well, over on the other side, we have two references, starting with Acts 22:16, where Paul is making his defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin. And as he explains his conversion to the Christian faith, he remembers the words of Ananias, who spoke to him after three days of prayer and fasting. At that point, Ananias says (in Acts 22:16), ***“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”*** So, we find here that baptism is associated with washing sins away.

Years later, Paul would go on to write the book of Ephesians, where (in Ephesians 5:26-27) he describes Christ as loving the church and giving himself up for her, ***“...so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”*** This ***“cleansing”*** is associated with the ***“washing of water with the word.”*** Even most people who deny the necessity of baptism will admit that Paul is clearly referring to baptism here. So we come back to our question: Are we washed by the blood of the Lamb? Or are our sins washed away at the point of baptism? And once again, the answer is, “Yes!” The blood of Jesus is the HOW, and baptism is the WHEN.

Conclusion:

This morning, we have had the awesome privilege of studying the blood of Jesus. I am thankful for the request that came in from two of you who join us on the phone each week. We’ve done the overview, we’ve looked specifically at the blood of Jesus, and today we’ve learned how to apply the blood of Jesus. We are saved by his blood, his blood forgives, his blood cleanses the conscience, his blood moves us from the outside to the inside, his blood washes our sins away, and we’ve learned this morning that all of these things also take place at the point of baptism. Today, then, we invite everyone here and everyone listening online or joining us on the phone to obey the good news immediately. Cry out to God for a clean conscience, allowing the blood of Jesus to be applied to your sins in baptism, putting your faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. If you have any questions, let us know; otherwise, you can be baptized immediately.

As we close our study and before we partake of the Lord’s Supper, let’s go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the great and merciful, awesome God. This morning, we are thankful for the blood of Jesus and for what his blood means to us. Your love is so deep we can barely understand it, but we are so thankful that you have explained what we need to do in words we can trust and obey.

This morning, we are thankful for the opportunity to come to you in worship, to study, to partake of the Supper, to pray together, to sing, and to bring our offerings to you together, pooling our

resources to support the preaching of the gospel and caring for the poor. We are thankful for abundant resources, we are thankful for the opportunities we've had to help others lately, and we ask for your wisdom and blessings as we continue to reach out with the good news.

Several of our brothers and sisters are suffering – some are sick, some are caring for those who are, some are facing emotional burdens that are almost too much to bear – and so we ask for your help. Be with us as we do the best we can to bear one another's burdens. Be with us as your people, that we might be able to serve and encourage.

We come to you with these requests in the name of your son Jesus. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com