

Made alive by



You may have seen one of those bumper stickers that says “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.” I don’t know about you, but those bumper stickers sadden me.

From all appearances, we have been suckered into believing that the central theme of the Gospel is forgiveness of sins. Just ask ten people what the whole essence of Christ’s coming can be summed up in, and at least nine out of those ten people will probably blurt out: “For the forgiveness of our sins!” To refocus our attention, in this article I would like to put our magnifying glass over the blood of the Lamb.

The bloody religion

Christianity is a bloody religion, no doubt about it. Yet the very essence and reason it is bloody is often grossly misunderstood. For example, let’s start by asking the “silly” question, “What is the blood?” Simple, right? Yet, I am afraid we may have missed an important point by not stopping to ponder on verses such as Deuteronomy 12:23: “Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.” The letter of this commandment is clear: the red liquid that flows in the veins of animals is not to be eaten. The point is, the blood contained that essence or substance which we call *life*. We really stretch our minds to grasp just what life is and consists of, but we all know that if you drain the blood out of a being that has blood, life ceases in that being. Therefore, God spells it out to us that if a person eats blood, he is partaking of the life of the animal or person that it once flowed in.

Did you catch that?

Let me repeat it: whoever eats blood is partaking of the life of the animal or person that it once flowed in. This is the key that unlocks the mystery of our bloody religion!

Let’s jump now right smack into the middle of a New Testament scene. We are in Judea, Capernaum to be exact. There is a large crowd of people listening to a Master. The crowd is composed of Jews, who have been strictly forbidden to never eat blood, this being one of the key points of their law; a point which they are vigorous to defend. Yet, listen to this Master as He spells out his teaching:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

Imagine the blow! Telling a bunch of Jewish people that they had to drink blood—His blood, to be exact—to have life! No wonder many of the listeners said “This is a hard saying ...” and that many of them “went back.”

Had I been in the crowd, I probably would have “went back” also: “Telling us that we have to drink blood to live? And more specifically, His blood? I’m out of here! This guy’s crazy! There is nothing more contrary to the Law than that!”

However, Jesus was not crazy. He, in fact, was actually giving an understanding of why God had prohibited the eating of blood. God had forbidden the eating of any other blood, for the simple reason that He wanted His people to

drink only one certain blood ... the blood of the Messiah! The only source of life, the only life that God wanted humanity to partake of, was that life that was in His only begotten Son! (1 John 5:11)

In this lies the secret of the blood: the blood is the life. If we partake of the blood, we are partaking of the life, or spirit, of the giver of that blood. And the Mosaic prohibition stands clear now: Don't partake of any spirit other than the Spirit—the life—of the Messiah!

Blood in the Holy of Holies

Turning yet to another Mosaic law (Lev. 16), we see blood once again, this time flowing out of goats and bulls. The scene is the inner chamber of the sanctuary, the place where no one was allowed to enter, except the high priest. Summing up the sequence of events, the animals were killed, and their blood was taken by the high priest and sprinkled over the contents of the room; which contents consisted of the ark, or box, of the covenant, and its lid, called "the mercyseat." Part of this "mercyseat" consisted of two angels facing each other, with

wings outspread and touching on the tips.

The "secret" of the inner sanctuary was that God, Jehovah, wanted to live there, between those two outstretched wings. There was no image of God in that room, as God's likeness could not be fashioned by anything created. He just had that area between those cherubim as "His space."

Now, let's stop to consider. What did the tabernacle represent, but a human (1 Cor. 3:16)? And what did the inner room signify, but the very spirit of man? In man's spirit was the box of the promises, which contained tokens of God's existence and law—Aaron's rod that budded, a pot of manna, and the stone with the commandments. This ark symbolizes the conscience of man, in man's spirit. Right above that was the area where God's presence was supposed to dwell.

God made man's spirit for a purpose; it was to be His special dwelling place! But there was a problem: sin! God is pure, and it is utterly impossible for Him to dwell where willful sin exists.

The root problem

But the problem goes back deeper than our willful sins. It goes back to the very first man, Adam. God created Adam, giving him a free will and a law to live by. God, knowing Adam's possibility and temptation to sin, warned Adam: "The day you eat of the tree will be the day you die."

We know the story. One day Adam did disobey. And on that day, Adam died. No, he did not die a physical death on that day, but he died in his spirit: God's Spirit left that inner sanctuary.

Death is not a substance or essence like life is. Death is simply the absence of life, the same way darkness is the absence of light. The only way to create darkness is to remove light. And the only way to create death is to remove life. And when God—Who is Life—moved out of Adam's spirit, Adam died, on the very day that he sinned. When the human spirit leaves the body, the body dies. When God's Spirit leaves the human spirit, the human spirit dies; this is called spiritual death.

As a consequence of that first sin, all of Adam's descendants are without God's Spirit automatically reigning in the inner sanctuary, their spirit. God is with babies and children, but He does not force His will in them (which is why even small babies manifest a sure selfishness). They are not led of the Spirit. Thus, because of Adam, all of humanity is born degenerated. (1 Co. 15:22)

Now the good news! As in Adam all die, so in Christ all shall be made alive

again!

How does this happen? With the blood of the atonement (the word literally means "at-one-ment", two separated things made one once again) sacrifice!

The blood of the atonement animals was drained out of them, and that blood was taken to the inner sanctuary and sprinkled on the ark. Now for the "secret", the very kernel of the Christian religion: the blood did not—as many suppose—merely purchase forgiveness from God, IT GAVE LIFE TO MAN'S SPIRIT! The life that was in the atonement sacrifice was drained out of the animal, and transferred to the inner sanctuary. It was—using modern medical terminology—a heavenly "blood transfusion," a conferring of the life of the one to the other. Who was our "at-one-ment," our

By the **Blood!**

propitiation (Ro. 3:25)? Jesus the Messiah, of course. He was killed. His life, His blood, was taken out of Him, and put into us, enlivening our dead spirit once again. It was a new birth of our spirit (Jn. 3:6); a giving of life; a regeneration or remaking; a renewal. In a word, it was a salvation, a salvaging of a formerly dead item, by giving it life once again.

Read carefully the following verses:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting forgiveness. (Jn. 3:16)

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no forgiveness in you. (Jn. 6:53)

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal forgiveness, and this forgiveness is in his Son. (1 Jn. 5:11)

Did you read them closely? Is so, you will have noticed that I misquoted them, quite on purpose. I actually quoted them as many people understand them, or better said, misunderstand them. Jesus did not shed his blood on the cross to merely purchase an eternal forgiveness for our sins, He died so that His blood—His life, or spirit—could be transferred to us! Now read them again, replacing the word “forgiveness” with the real word: “life!”

Saved by the blood

Saved by the blood! But how does that blood save us? Like this:

Suppose I am an impatient man. What can conquer my impatience, but patience? But I find I have no patience to drive out my impatience. So, along comes Jesus and offers to give me, as an undeserved gift, His patience. He pours it into my spirit, and my impatience is conquered, driven away.

Or, suppose I am bound in bitterness. What can deliver me but a good dose of forgiving love? But, alas, I have none

within myself. Here comes a man, the man Christ Jesus, and He has plenty of love to spare. So He takes some of that love that He is filled with, and sprinkles it into my inner being. His love sets me free from my unforgiveness!

Finally, suppose I come to the realization that the underlying cause of all my sin is an impotent spirit. Yes, my spirit is willing and desirous to live righteously and holy, but simply impotent, unable to perform that which it desires. God does not live in my spirit; it is dead, devoid of that “Life-Which-Is-Eternal.” What can save me? Nothing but the blood—the life—of Jesus!

In faith, I turn to Jesus. By means of faith, I receive that blood which gives life. My spirit revives! I am free! My dead spirit is resurrected to newness of life! Praise God for the blood of the Lamb!

Yes, the first Adam was made a living soul, but the second Adam, Jesus Christ my Lord, was made a QUICKENING (life-giving) spirit (1 Co. 15:45). The very kernel of Christianity is LIFE, not forgiveness.

Paul wrote to the Galatians (3:21), “*Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*” Notice what he points out as the supreme weakness of the Mosaic law: it could not GIVE LIFE. Earlier in the chapter, he had asked them a simple question (v. 2): “*This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*”

The question was, in other terms, what opened the door for you to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit: faith, or circumcision and sabbath-keeping? It was faith, of course. But what I would like for us to ponder on is how Paul equates salvation with that “receiving the Spirit.” It was the Spirit of God coming into the heart of man that which liberated mankind from sin. This Spirit is the life-blood of Christianity. This Spirit was the gift, totally unmerited, given to man. In a word, the Spirit was the grace that brought life.

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Perhaps you see the picture now. Our atonement was sacrificed, and His blood was then sprinkled into our inner sanctuary to bring it to life. Yes, we were forgiven ... but much more happened with that blood than forgiving us. We were made alive by it! Consider what some of the early church writers had to say concerning the blood giving life:

*Ye therefore, clothing yourselves with meekness, become the imitators of His sufferings, and of His love, wherewith He loved us when He gave Himself a ransom for us, that He might cleanse us by His blood from our old ungodliness, and **bestow life on us** when we were almost on the point of perishing through the depravity that was in us. [Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians]*

*He has **renewed us by the quickening of His blood**; to bring us anew to paradise, to open the*

kingdom of heaven, in the faith and truth of His promise! [Cyprian]

*Those adversaries, those blasphemers, those who were always enemies to His name, if they repent of their sin, if they acknowledge the crime committed, He receives, not only to the pardon of their sin, but to the reward of the heavenly kingdom. What can be said more patient, what more merciful? Even he who has shed Christ's blood is **made alive by Christ's blood**. Such and so great is the patience of Christ; and had it not been such and so great, the Church would never have possessed Paul as an apostle. [Cyprian]*

For all this was done that the Lamb and Son of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, might, of His own will, and for us, come to His saving Pas-

sion ... and that those who bought Him might for thirty pieces of silver covenant for Him who, with **His life-giving blood**, was to redeem the world; and that Christ, our passover, might be sacrificed for us, in order that those who were sprinkled with His precious blood, and sealed on their lips, as the posts of the door, might escape from the darts of the destroyer ... [Methodius]

Only life can cure death!

ing in the vomit of our own wretchedness, striving to perform works of life, but without life. Imagine a dead bird trying to do the works of a live one, trying to fly in the heavens! Now imagine a dead tree trying to produce Golden Delicious apples. Next, try to imagine a man devoid of God's Spirit—spiritually dead—trying to produce the fruits of the Spirit!

It will not happen. And this spiritually dead man can ask forgiveness 1000 times a day, but that will not produce the desired fruit. What can save him from his death?

The blood, the life, of the crucified Messiah! Only life can cure death!

Yes, Christianity is a matter of life or death. Has your spirit been made alive by the blood of the Lamb?

~Mike Atnip

This article is based on a chapter of a book on the same subject that the author is writing, called The Gospel of the Kingdom.

What exactly does the life of Christ—His blood—do for us when it is sprinkled into our spirit?

- Provides forgiveness of committed sins (Eph. 1:7)
- Purges the conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14)
- Makes us holy (Heb. 13:11)
- Makes us upright, just (Rom. 5:9)
- Makes it possible to be reunited with God (after all, God, who is Life, cannot mix with death) (Rom. 3:25)
- Redeems (purchases) us from Satan, sin, and spiritual death (Acts 20:28, Col. 1:14, Eph. 1:7)
- Purges sin out of the heart (1 John 1:7)
- Perfects our doing of good works, things that are well-pleasing to Him (Heb. 13:21)
- Gives us power over Satan (Rev. 12:11)

In summary

Back to that bumper sticker mentioned earlier: “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.” Is that true?

As we have seen, it is not the truth. Christians are more than “just forgiven.” Their spirit is given life by the blood of Christ!

Yes, Christianity is more than a matter of “forgiven” and “unforgiven.” Christianity is a matter of being dead or alive. Paul told the Ephesians (2:1), “*And you hath he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.*” There we were, ly-