

The Life and Health of the Body is in the Blood  
Ephesians 2:14-16  
October 17, 2010 Kit

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### The Body and The Blood

We exist to increase the health and size of God's Church everywhere. I have been preaching messages on this subject for several weeks now. There is much to be said about this. However, if only one message could be preached on the health and growth of the church, that message is the one we will look at today. That is the message of the cross of Christ.

If there is only one piece of advice that could be given to every preacher and every church planter and every church leader in the world, it would be: preach the cross. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the reality that He died to redeem sinners and rose to bring new life, this is the message that is the healthy heart of every healthy church, and it is the miracle grow for every church plant. It is impossible to keep the cross central to all a church does and to be unhealthy at the same time. It is impossible to keep the cross of Jesus at the forefront of church planting ministries and not grow as God has designed.

"For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." We preach Christ Crucified. At the cross we have the power of God, the message of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God, the love of God.

"I determined to know nothing among you except...

"God demonstrates His love for us in this....

"This is a trustworthy statement that Christ died...

"No greater love has any man than this...

"Without the shedding of blood...

"For I am not ashamed ...

"For if we have died with Him...

"Take, eat...

"This is the new covenant ...

"We proclaim the Lord's death...

It is amazing how many messages I have heard in my life from good Christian preachers that have not mentioned or been centered on the cross of Christ. I am ashamed to say that as a new preacher I fell into this trap often also; thinking that as I pulled profound messages from the text, I could preach them without the context of the cross.

The death and resurrection of Christ is the gospel message. Gospel centered churches and gospel centered lives will be blessed with riches in the Spirit by our God. The message of the cross is never to be reduced for a message we save only for evangelism and put away when speaking to the flock of Jesus. No, it is the message of evangelism and becomes the message that feeds us until the day He comes back.

If we have pulpits not dominated by the cross every week, and if we live lives not dominated by the cross every day, then we will have churches that are dominated by the law, and we will live lives dominated by the flesh, and not the Spirit. And so, Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” And so we do.

Ephesians 2:14-16 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, ....

In context, Paul is speaking about how the Church now contains both Gentiles and Jews. The wall that kept the two apart has been torn down. That wall was the Law of Moses. How can God’s Law, which is good and holy, be a wall that creates division? The answer is ***in the Law of Moses all flesh is doomed to hell***. When we think of pleasing God, it is natural to think that if we will keep all His rules then He will be pleased. It is natural to think that God is keeping score and if we keep His law 80% or 90% of the time then we will be more good than bad. But it is not so.

The Bible says:

Romans 3:20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

A good Jew, seeking to keep the Law of God will not be able to and is a sinner before God, a law-breaker. But the Gentiles, who did not even have the Law of God, they are just as bad off. They also break the Law, but don’t even know the extent of their sins. ***The Law of God is perfect, righteous, and allows for no deviation***. All who break the Law of God, at any point, shall be banished forever from His presence, punished for their sinfulness. You might say, “I didn’t think I was that sinful.” Well you are because He is that holy.

No one on this earth is good enough. Not the devout Muslim, not the moralistic agnostic, not the enlightened Hindu, not the profound Buddhist, not the religious Christian, not the orthodox Jew. The Law will kill you. You have broken it. Because of this, you are an enemy of God and there is not hope for you.

Enter in Jesus, who according to our text in Ephesians, abolished in His flesh, on the cross, the anger of God against you because of your lawlessness. If any here says, “Well, I’m insulted. I refuse to believe that I am that bad and that God is that angry at me”, then you are doubly lost and bound for hell in your foolish pride. Who are you oh man, to tell God you are righteous enough to stand in His presence when He has told you by His law that you are insufficient?

If you say, “I will take my chances. I will try to be good and then stand before God and see how I do on my own,” then you will go to hell. Why? Because the Law is perfect and it will not justify you. No. It will condemn you because you are a law breaker.

***But if you will believe in Jesus, who has died as a substitute for you, then you can receive forgiveness of sins and the Law will have no power to condemn you!***

Jesus kept the Law and was justified by the Law for He has no sin in Him. He has offered Himself in your place.

Therefore, the Law could not justify you, and will not justify you. But Christ can. See the scripture and believe:

Romans 8:3-4 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

When Jesus says to you, "Take, Eat, This is my body," He is instructing you to trust in His sacrifice for you, not in yourself.

**Ephesians 2:14-16, continued....**

so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Paul, using the theme that the separation between Jew and Greek was torn down by the work of Jesus, also reminds us that the cross is the means that God has used to end our status as God's enemies. Now, Jews and Gentiles can both be called the friends of God because we can be justified outside of the Law. We don't need to worry about the Law for justification has come from Jesus.

So then, at the cross, the body of Christ explains how we gain peace with God, through the body which was sacrificed in our place. However, there is more to the power of the cross. For not only was His body broken for you, but His blood was spilled. What does this mean to us? Well, to start, it means our sins are gone for good, for "Without the shedding of blood...." But there's more than that; much more.

For having one's sins forgiven is not enough to save. One also needs to be changed within. ***We need to go from being the spiritually dead sinner to the spiritually alive believer. We need within us, instead of the desire to do evil, the true desire to do good. We also need the power to do good.***

You aren't born with this power. That is why you cannot be justified by keeping the Law. In order to have the power to obey God, to want to obey God, to love the righteousness of God, you must have the life of Jesus put into you. You must be "born again."

Look what Jesus said at the Last Supper:

Luke 22:20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

Christ's blood, His life, poured out for us, is the New Covenant. The New Covenant means the New Contract, or the New Arrangement. Under the old covenant, God would bless you only if you kept His Law, only if you worshiped only Him. But you could not do that, for you are a law-breaker.

Under this New Covenant, not only are your sins forgiven, but within you God makes a change and enables you to keep His commandments, to love His commandments, to rejoice in them and be righteous before Him. In the New arrangement, it doesn't depend on you to be good. He is good and does good in you.

Look at the New Covenant as the Prophet foretold it:

Ezekiel 36: 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

The power to live a new life is in you. Christians, we struggle against sin and find defeat because we attempt to do so in our own power, setting up laws for ourselves, and seeking to win battles by our own will power. We cannot do this and win. But within you is the power to not sin, for He has put it into you. As you mature in Christ what you learn is that the key to overcoming sin is growing in your daily practice of faith. Believing in the power of the Jesus in you is the key to overcoming sin. Don't be discouraged if you are in this fight. Keep fighting, but switch from will power to faith. He has put the power in you. He has. Period.

You say, "I don't feel it." I know. What you feel is influenced often by your flesh, not your faith. God's not asking you to feel His power over sin –He's asking you to believe it's there. In order to strengthen that faith, meditate on this text:

Galatians 2:20-21 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

## CONCLUSION

And now, we will celebrate the gospel in the simple and ancient means that binds all Christians together, through the bread and the wine.

As we move to the communion, do you believe? Do you believe Jesus died for your sins? If so, turn from them, repent, and trust in Him –when you believe in earnest, He will put the new life in you and you shall receive the benefits of the cross and be born again.