

Resurrection Life in the Blood

1. Our life is in our blood.

- *Genesis 2:7, 9:4*

2. Our death is in our blood.

- *Romans 5:19; Psalm 51:5; Romans 6:23a; Leviticus 17:11;
Hebrews 9:22*

3. Resurrection life is in Christ's blood.

- *Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:13-14; John. 6:53-55; Romans 5:7-9*

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Resurrection Life in the Blood

We start a new series today called “Resurrection Life.” Last week of course was Easter, and what a great day that was – we had over 400 total in attendance in this room – very close to our regular pre-pandemic, in-person attendance. When you add our approximate online attendance, we estimate that the total altogether could be as high as over 600 who gathered together online and in person to celebrate in an amazing way.

Since last Sunday was Easter, of course we talked about the resurrection of Jesus, and most of us made some kind of commitment to a resurrection life in Christ – some for the first time, others to recommit ourselves to that life.

But what exactly does resurrection life *do* for us? What does it *look like* in us? Those are questions we want to answer in this new series. Today as we share in communion, I want us to see that there is resurrection life in the blood.

How many of you have donated blood before? I hope you know that our church hosts a Red Cross blood drive every other month, so you can give regularly here at the church. Teri Fleming does an excellent job organizing these for us and making it as easy as possible for folks to sign up and to donate. I would highly recommend it! It is a great way to make a difference in the lives of others (which ought to be the priority for every Christian!).

I don't even know how many times all total in my life I've given blood, but I know that it doesn't even come close to the times that some people in our church have donated.

I'll never forget the first time I donated blood; I was in high school in Salem, Oregon. I had just turned old enough. Now they start out by poking your finger in order to get a blood sample, but back then the first thing they did was draw a drop of blood from the ear lobe. But they couldn't get their little gun to work, so they tried again and it sort of worked, but then they couldn't get enough blood out of it, so they used it on my right ear. That one started bleeding, but by then so did my left ear, so I had to sit there with cotton balls holding both my ears while I waited to give blood. Finally I could move on to the gurney where they were going to draw my blood from my left arm. But for some reason, they had difficulty getting the needle into my vein. They tried three times, and on the fourth time they backed all the way out and got a running start, jabbing me in the arm. That time they got the vein...and went right through the other side of it. So they tried fishing around in there with the needle while it was in my arm. It was a little painful. So they backed out again and went to the other arm – my right arm, meanwhile my left arm started really bleeding. They were so focused on getting the needle into my right arm that they quit paying attention to my left arm. They finally get the vein in my right arm and then were

suddenly all worked up about the puddle of blood from my left arm, so they run over to the other side of the gurney, desperately working to stop the bleeding on my left arm. They were flinging my left arm up in the air like I'm a rag doll, when they notice that not only had a lot of blood drained from my arms, but the blood drained out of my face, too. They told me I'd better lay back, which I was more than happy to do. My right arm kept pumping into the bag, so I finally walked out of there, tired and pale, with bandages on both ears and both arms. It's a wonder I ever gave blood again. But I did and have, many times since, and I'm glad to do it. I hope you do, too, and I promise it won't be like my first experience was.

But what is it about blood that holds such fascination for us? Our language reflects it; terms like "blood brothers," "blood is thicker than water," "bad blood," "blood bath," "blood relation," "blood thirsty," "blood hound," "pure blood," "blood curdling," "in cold blood," "blue blood," "bloodshot," "bloodlust," "bloodshed," "bloodline," "life blood" ... all speak of the strong interest we have in blood and even the mystical power that we sometimes attach to it.

In fact, it's not been until within the last 100 years or so that we've even allowed blood transfusions. Some primitive cultures still do not allow "sharing" blood because they say it means you are giving away a part of yourself – your very life and essence and personhood to someone else. Some myths and traditions about blood *still* survive in our culture. There are today some backward religions and cults that won't allow blood transfusions – and their children die because of it.

Did you know that when people marry, they put a ring on their third finger because that was once known as the "leech finger" – it was believed that it contained the major vein leading directly to the heart. The ring on the leech finger meant that you were joining your life blood with another.

All of this leads to the first point of what I believe God wants to teach us today...

1. Our **life** is in our blood.

As we prepare for communion today, we need to realize that blood is our life.

When you go to the doctor for an annual physical, what is the one thing you have to do to check your health before you see your doctor? You have to go to the lab and they do a blood draw – filling several different vials with your blood so they can test it. A blood test is the first indicator for the health your life. Your life is in the blood, and the lab tests will help determine how healthy your blood is, and therefore your life.

You can survive up to a month without food, a day or two without water, but only a couple minutes without enough oxygen-rich blood.

Remember from the creation story that in order for Adam and Eve to become alive, God breathed into Adam the breath of life:

“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”
(Genesis 2:7, niv)

That breath of life – oxygen – is what we *must* have to live, and it is transported in our bodies *through our blood*. That’s why God says in Genesis 9:4...

“...you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.” (Genesis 9:4, niv)

That means that very early on in the existence of people – long before the Old Testament law was given, God made it clear that humans must not eat meat from an animal that still has its blood in it. Why would God establish that rule? Well, for one, the blood in an animal spoils really quickly, and spoiled blood spoils the meat very quickly. In a hot desert region, you want the meat to cool down as quickly as you can so it will last longer. But there was far more than germ warfare going on here. When you eat the blood, it is symbolic of eating the animal’s very life. Blood represents life.

It’s not just true biologically; it is true spiritually too. In the Bible, referring to Christ and in relation to the sacrifice he made for us with his life, the New Testament talks about Christ’s blood *three times* more than the cross, and *five times* more than his death. It is true physically and spiritually – blood is our life.

Blood also identifies who you are. It is your heritage, your story, part of your identity. You have your parents’ blood in your veins, whether you like it or not! It’s your blood that is used to prove whose kid you are. Have any of you done a DNA ancestry test? What was your biggest surprise?

My point is that, biologically, spiritually, and relationally our very life and essence is in our blood.

Unfortunately...

2. Our ***death*** is in our blood, too.

We’ve already said that you have your parents’ blood. That means you also inherited whatever genetic defects and problems they had, which *they* got from *their* parents. And there are some pretty serious blood diseases. But if I were to ask you what the most serious blood-borne pathogen was, especially from the end of the last century, would anyone want to guess what it is? It’s HIV-AIDS. There is still no cure, although science has figured out how to manage the symptoms. It isn’t the deadly disease that it once was, although it is a chronic disease. Tragically, even innocent bystanders were infected, often through unsterilized needles and transfusions. We are still saddened every time we hear of a baby born with HIV-AIDS, having been infected in its mother’s womb.

As tragic as that is, there is a blood-epidemic that faces us that’s even *worse* than HIV-AIDS. Millions of babies are born infected by this blood disease, and that disease is always 100% fatal. And you and I are carriers as well. That blood disease

is called sin. We got it from our parents, and they got it from theirs, all the way back to the first parents – Adam and Eve. That’s why the Bible says:

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.” (Romans 5:19, nlt)

When you get to the New Testament, you’ll see that it simply reinforces what’s been clear since the Old Testament. King David himself wrote in Psalm 51:

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalms 51:5, niv)

That’s why the Apostle Paul wrote:

“For the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23a, niv)

In other words, wages are paid for work you’ve done – for what you’ve earned – and what we’ve earned as a result of our sin is death. Sin is a 100% fatal blood disease, and we all have it – 100% of humans.

The Good News is that if you could get a blood transfusion of un-diseased blood, you could be cured. With sin we have diseased blood, so we need pure, clean blood. The bad news is that every person born of man has the same diseased blood.

So in the Old Testament, God provided a temporary solution – a blood substitutionary system. In that system, an animal without a disease or blemish could be killed and have its blood shed as a substitute for our bad blood. In Leviticus 17:11 God explains it:

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” (Leviticus 17:11, niv).

This shedding of blood is necessary; we have no cure without it:

“In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (Hebrews 9:22, niv)

The problem with the old system of bloodshed was that it only treated the *symptoms*, not the disease. It wasn’t a cure; it was like a painkiller.

Many of you know that I have struggled with chronic headaches for the last six years since that person on his motorcycle caused my auto accident. I’ve tried four different types of nerve medications to block the pain, but those have only had marginal success and significant side effects. By the way, I refuse to take any kind of pain medication or opioids. I’d rather be in pain with a clear head than be in a fog without pain. I’ve had numerous shots in my neck and head and twice I’ve gone in for them to burn the nerves to try to block the nerves from sending pain signals, again with marginal success and painful side effects, and even nerves grow back after they’ve been burned. But all of those attempts haven’t solved the issue; they are pain blockers.

That’s what the problem is with the old system of blood shed – it didn’t remove the disease, it only covered it and gave you an idea of what life *could* be like, but the pain

killer would soon wear off and you'd need another dose. The problem was that the sin was still there.

What we needed was a total transfusion of untainted blood. But remember we said that everyone born of man has diseased blood. If only there was someone whose life *did not* originate in man...are you beginning to get the picture? Jesus' life originated with God, yet he was born of a woman. If you were to give Jesus a paternity test, you would find his father's blood coursing through his veins. And you would know that because of the absence of sin in his blood. So, while *our* life is in our blood, unfortunately our death is also in our blood, but thank God that...

3. Resurrection life is in Christ's blood.

Remember that passage we read in Romans 6:23 that said that the wages, or the payment we have earned for our sin is death? Well that was only half of the verse. That's the bad news. The other half of the verse is the Good News. Let me read that to you again:

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23, niv)

We no longer need the *old* system of temporarily covering our sin because in Christ we have the *new* system which is curative and permanent. Instead of blood-shed, it is blood-shared. Christ has provided for us a transfusion of clean, un-diseased blood. That's why the Bible says this:

“The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:13-14, niv)

We share together in communion in order to remind and reinforce that blood transfusion. But there's something else here. Remember I mentioned that it was against Old Testament law to eat the blood of an animal? Jews felt so strongly about it, that they had an entire process of preparing food that was developed to make “kosher” food – food without blood.

But do you realize that every time we receive communion, it appears that we are breaking the Old Testament law – because we are “drinking” blood? Listen to what the Bible says:

“Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.’” (John 6:53-55, niv)

Wait – what did he say? To the Jews, this statement was extremely offensive. So why would Jesus say such a thing, especially since he himself was a Jew? He said it

because he was making the point that the old system no longer worked, that we need a transfusion – we need his life in us – trading our blood for his blood. Of course, Jesus didn't mean that we *literally* drink his blood and eat his flesh, but the spiritual reality is just as true. The old system was not the answer; it just pointed us toward the cure. That's why the Bible says:

“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!” (Romans 5:7-9, niv)

You know what amazes me? If you had a cure for HIV-AIDS, and you asked a person who was dying from it if they would like to have the cure, do you think they would walk away and say, “No thanks, I'd rather keep dying – I'm very comfortable with it. Besides, those of you with the cure don't have any fun.” *NO* – that person would do anything to be cured.

Yet why is it, with a blood disease that has killed millions of times more people than AIDS ever will – in fact, without God's cure, sin kills 100% of us (for the wages of sin is death...) – why do people walk away and say, “No thanks, I'd rather die – I'm comfortable where I am. Besides, I'm having more fun.” It's absurd!

So here we are...and the question for us is, have you accepted the cure? Have you had this total blood transfusion? Have you been walking away from the cure you need? Or are you convinced that the old system is good enough – just an occasional sacrifice of going to church, or praying, or doing a good deed, or putting some money in the offering once in a while, to cover the pain without curing the problem? Why not have a complete transfusion – get rid of your diseased, poisoned blood completely and receive from Jesus his clean, holy blood. Begin to live resurrection life today – a life of abundance here that goes on for all eternity. You can do so by receiving communion, in faith today.

Maybe you simply need a check-up – you need to run a blood test to remind you who your father is. You can do a self-examination as we receive communion in faith today.

Worse yet, many of us in this room have the cure, and we refuse to share it with those who are dying. I would contend that *receiving communion without a commitment to share the cure with others is nothing more than greedily, gluttonously, consuming it only for yourself.*

As we prepare for communion, in a moment you will be invited to come forward and receive the elements – one of these packets – and then take it back to your seat so we can share in this together. As you receive the juice and the bread, consider your own blood. Have you let him cure you? With communion, we remember what Christ has done for us. So talk to God about your blood while we come and receive the elements. Allow him to forgive your sin and accept his blood. Or if you already have, then use this time to affirm what he's done for you, praise him for it, and

commit yourself to sharing the cure with others. Again, please hold the elements until we can share them together.

Before we receive these elements, I want to quickly share this story with you: this idea of Christ's blood cleansing us from sin was familiar to the shepherds of Jesus' day, because everyone knew the problem of the shepherd. The shepherd would check his flock in the morning and find a new lamb...but the mother had died during the night. In another portion of his flock, he would find a mother sitting silently beside her child still-born during the night. The mother would die of a broken heart and the orphan would die from lack of sustenance. All logic would tell you to put the orphan under the care of the childless mother...but the two would know that they were foreign and would not accept each other. The moment of wisdom came when the old shepherd would see in this event the nature of our relationship to God. We are so separated from God by our sin that God is dying of a broken heart and we are dying from lack of sustenance. And it seems that nothing can be done. We are foreigners to each other. But one thing can be done. It is still being done by shepherds.

If you slit the throat and drain the blood of the dead baby and wash the orphan in the blood of the lamb, the living mama smells her own and moves around so that the orphan can suckle, can come home to the table. Because of the shed blood of the sinless Christ, we are adopted into God's family as his very own children.

Communion:

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." (*eat the bread*)

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." (*drink the cup*)

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Prayer of committal and thanksgiving

Please stand for the benediction:

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21, niv)