

Bethel

Pulpit

Not without Blood
An Easter Meditation

**Address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 10th April, 2017**

Text: *“Not without blood” (Hebrews 9. 7).*

Only three words, but beloved friends, there are not more vital words found anywhere in Scripture, and no words which are more vital for you and me personally, because there is no hope and no salvation apart from the blood of Christ and a saving interest in it.

“Sin to pardon without blood
Never in God’s nature stood.”

And this solemn truth is recorded on almost every page of the Word of God, right from Genesis to Revelation, right from man’s fall in the Garden of Eden to the restitution of all things at the end.

So it is like a scarlet cord that runs through Scripture, through the gospel from beginning to end, these letters, these words written in scarlet letters. You go right back to the beginning and the emphasis to our first parents of this truth when they fell: “Not without blood.” They had been expelled from Paradise. They sought a way of escape, a way of salvation without blood, a bloodless covering, a bloodless sacrifice, fig leaves. “Not without blood.” The Lord clothed them with coats of skins which, if words mean anything at all, means blood must first have been shed.

You can follow this scarlet cord all the way through, and then it comes to its conclusion in the Book of the Revelation. “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” In other words, the company of the redeemed, how did they get to heaven? In a word, the answer was this: “Not without blood.” “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes” – every one of them, “not without blood” – “in the blood of the Lamb.” It is a beautiful theme, this scarlet cord, as you follow it through.

“Not without blood.” Cain and Abel. Cain tried to approach a holy God with a sacrifice, but it was a bloodless sacrifice; it was without blood. But Abel, taught by the Spirit of God, and blessed with faith, and looking forward to gospel days, the more excellent sacrifice he brought was “not without

blood.” It was a slain lamb, pointing to the dear Lamb of God, “which taketh away the sin of the world,” and his offering was accepted.

“Not without blood.” And then as you follow it on, and as you trace it out, Abraham and Isaac, Mount Moriah, Jehovah-Jireh. “God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” Isaac was to be set free, but it was to be “not without blood.” There must be substitution. There must be the lamb caught with his horns in the thicket. The lamb must be slain; the blood must be shed. The old preachers used to say so often, “In the room, place and stead.” That is substitution; He instead of me. “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

“Not without blood.” Then of course there was the famous occasion, the Passover night, the destroying angel, death in every house, whether the firstborn of the Egyptians or the lamb in the place of the firstborn. Loving provision was made for Israel, God’s ancient people, but “not without blood.” They had to take a lamb. The lamb had to be slain, the blood shed, and it was precious; it was salvation. The blood had to be sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of their houses. The destroying angel would pass over them – mercy, salvation, deliverance – but “not without blood.” “The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

“Not without blood.” And then you come to the ceremonial law, and all the types and shadows, “the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain.” Typically, ceremonially, there was to be no hope for guilty Israel apart from the blood. They had to learn that lesson:

“Sin to pardon without blood
Never in God’s nature stood.”

“Think not that He will, or may,
Pardon any other way.”

It was so especially on the great day of the atonement, when the blood was shed and the high priest entered in, and he took the blood which he offered for himself as well as the errors of the people. O you see the fulfilment in Christ. “By His own blood he entered in once” – never to be repeated – “once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Which all leads us up to the glorious Person of the dear Lamb of God, and the great

work of salvation for needy sinners. You see it there before the Lord Jesus came.

“Not without blood.” There was the plan of salvation. There was the everlasting covenant. There was the choice of a number that no man could number. They were all ordained, every one of them, to reach heaven. But it was “not without blood,” and so in the covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus was appointed, and He willingly undertook the whole of salvation’s work, for poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinners who could not save themselves. The Lord Jesus knew from all eternity that it would be “not without blood.” There was suffering before Him; there was agony; there was Gethsemane; there was the judgment hall; there was Calvary. It was “not without blood” that the work of redemption could be complete, and it was “not without blood” that the eternal Son of God fulfilled the will of His Father in the salvation of sinners.

Now then, beloved friends, we do not want this just to be doctrine, though I think some of us do know what Luther meant when he said, “Doctrine is heaven.” Well, it is if you receive it by faith in your soul. If you receive these three precious words as a doctrine, it will be heaven to you. O but to stop, and pause, and consider. “Not without blood.” O but what it meant for the Saviour to shed His precious blood! Really, the meaning of the word *blood* in Scripture is this: *life poured out in death*. Sometimes we need to come down to the little children’s hymn to realise the depth of it, the awfulness of it.

“But such a cruel death He died,
He was hung up and crucified;
And those kind hands that did such good,
They nailed them to a cross of wood.”

O to contemplate the dear Redeemer’s sufferings!

So not just to think of it as a doctrine, but to admire, and to wonder, and to worship, and to take our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. O but to see the love in it, the matchless love in it, that “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And then to see the characters of those He loved, that “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”; “Christ died for the ungodly.” It was “not without blood,” not without the Saviour’s agonies and death. It was “not without blood,” but the

great work of redemption was complete when the dying Saviour cried with a loud voice, “It is finished,” and “bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.”

Now beloved friends, may we at this time of the year be sweetly, sacredly, solemnly led by the Holy Spirit into these truths, to feel our great need, to see it met in the Saviour, to be persuaded of our personal interest, to bow our heads, to worship, to love, to adore. Now all the apostles take this up. The apostle writing in the Epistle to the Hebrews, on almost every page he takes it up: “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” Peter takes it up: “Not redeemed with corruptible things ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” And John takes it up: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

“Not without blood.” So we are brought to it personally. “Not without blood.” Without blood, without the blood of Christ, there is no forgiveness, no cleansing, no access to a holy God, no acceptance by Him, no way to heaven. Apart from the blood of Christ, the whole of humanity would be eternally lost.

It is to be brought to see this personally, because by nature we are always trying to seek some other way of acceptance, or some other way of gaining favour, or something in us, or something we may do or can do, or our repentance, or our prayers. But as the glorious gospel is preached, this is the theme of it: the blood of Christ, and in greater or less measure, each one of us, led by the Spirit of God, must be brought to this: that it is “not without blood” we can ever find God’s favour. It is *only* by blood that we can ever be saved. The well-known hymn Rock of Ages, that is really the point:

“Not the labour of my hands,
Can fulfil Thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply” – O that is it! –
“Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

O beloved friends, I hope as a congregation here this evening – the older ones, those in the middle of life, our young people, our children – may we each be taught this lesson: our great need of salvation. O that is the discovery, to have our eyes opened, to have our hearts touched, to know we are sinners. We must die; we are unfit; we are unprepared; we are not ready; we cannot make ourselves ready. And so it is painfully to feel our need, and to be led to see there is only one place where that need can be met, and it is in a Person, a glorious Person, the almighty Son of God from all eternity who took our nature, without sin, into union with His divine Person, an almighty Saviour, a willing Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost.

O tell me, you young ones, do you see an attraction in the Saviour? And you older ones, do you ever say, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want”? This coming week and Good Friday, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?” Is it? “Is it nothing to you?” There are one or two here who can stand up and say, I believe it is everything to me. O but, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.” O but it is this, as led by the Spirit of God: to see it is only the Saviour who can meet our deep need. But it is not just the Saviour in His example and teaching. It is the Saviour in His death in the place of His people, bearing their sins, bearing them away. It is in the Saviour’s precious blood. And it is to be brought to this: that not without the blood of Christ can we ever find salvation.

Now in closing, just think of the opposite. “Not without blood,” this word says. Really it is a double-negative. There are two negatives here: “Not without blood.” What am I getting at? The real point is this: *with the blood*. O what is there *with the blood*, with the precious blood, with the blood of Christ, with the blood of the Lamb once slain, but now exalted? O what is there *with the blood*? Well, there is hope for “the vilest sinner out of hell, who lives to feel his need.” There is forgiveness. O with the blood there is “a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness” where “sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.” With the blood there is everything that a sinner can need. With the blood there is every blessing, every favour. With the blood there is salvation. With the blood there is everlasting life. And then, with the blood there is heaven at last, to sing, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” And O beloved friends, may your heart and mine be touched, and may we feel our personal interest.