

## **The Cross; The Blood**

The message of the cross sits at the very centre of our faith, not as a distant theological concept but as the defining act of God's love and justice meeting in perfect harmony. It is here that we begin to understand both the seriousness of sin and the depth of God's commitment to redeem His people. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18 that "the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." What appears weak and irrational to the world is, in reality, the very wisdom and strength of heaven.

When we consider the cross, we are drawn into the reality that sin is not a minor issue that can be overlooked. It separates, distorts, and ultimately destroys. Yet God's response is not abandonment but intervention. Romans 5:8 reminds us that "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." The timing is crucial. Christ did not wait for humanity to improve or to become worthy. The cross was God's initiative, not our achievement.

Central to this is the shedding of blood. In a modern context, this can feel uncomfortable, even unsettling, yet Scripture consistently points to the necessity of it. Hebrews 9:22 states plainly that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." This is not arbitrary. It reflects the seriousness of sin and the cost of atonement. From the earliest pages of the Bible, we see this principle at work. In Genesis 3, after the fall, God clothes Adam and Eve with garments made from skins, pointing to the first sacrifice. In Exodus, the blood of the Passover lamb marks the homes of the Israelites, shielding them from judgment and securing their deliverance.

All of this finds its fulfilment in Jesus. John the Baptist declares in John 1:29, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." This is not symbolic language alone. Jesus becomes the ultimate sacrifice, the one to whom all previous sacrifices pointed. His blood is not just another offering but the final and sufficient one. Hebrews 10:14 tells us that "by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." There is a completeness to what Christ has done that leaves nothing to be added.

This has profound implications for how we understand our relationship with God. Too often, we slip into patterns of trying to earn what has already been given. We measure our standing with God by our performance, our consistency, or our perceived spiritual progress. Yet the cross confronts this mindset. It tells us that our salvation rests not on what we do but on what Christ has done. Ephesians 2:8-9 makes this clear, saying that "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

At the same time, the cross is not only about forgiveness but transformation. The blood of Christ does not merely cover sin; it cleanses and renews. 1 John 1:7 says that "the

blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” This speaks to an ongoing reality. We are not only forgiven once but continually invited into a life of holiness and freedom. The same power that justifies us also begins to shape us into the likeness of Christ.

There is also a corporate dimension to this truth. As a fellowship, we are united not by shared preferences or backgrounds but by the blood of Jesus. Ephesians 2:13 declares that “in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” This creates a new community, one marked by reconciliation, humility, and love. The divisions that so often define the world are overcome at the cross.

In practical terms, this calls us to live differently. The cross becomes both our foundation and our pattern. Jesus Himself says in Luke 9:23, “whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” This is not about earning salvation but responding to it. We lay down our own agendas, our need for control, and our self-centred ambitions, and we choose instead to walk in obedience and surrender.

As we reflect on the cross and the blood, we are invited to return again to the simplicity and depth of the gospel. It is easy to move on to other things, to become preoccupied with secondary matters, yet everything flows from this central truth. The cross is where mercy triumphs over judgment, where love overcomes sin, and where hope is secured for all who believe.

In a world that often seeks quick solutions and easy answers, the cross stands as a reminder that true redemption is costly but complete. As we gather, serve, and live out our faith in this community, may we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, remembering that it is His blood that has brought us near, His sacrifice that has set us free, and His victory that defines our future.

## Questions

1. How does the message of the cross challenge our natural way of thinking about strength and wisdom, and what does this reveal about God’s power in our lives (**1 Corinthians 1:18**)
2. In what ways does understanding that Christ died for us while we were still sinners reshape our view of grace and worthiness (**Romans 5:8**)
3. Why is the shedding of blood central to forgiveness in Scripture, and how does this deepen our appreciation of what Jesus accomplished (**Hebrews 9:22**)
4. How does the truth that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works, influence the way we live and relate to God daily (**Ephesians 2:8–9**)
5. What does it mean in practical terms to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus, and how might this look in our everyday decisions (**Luke 9:23**)