

The “blood of Jesus cleanses,” 1 Jn 1:7: at Salvation & Rebound; Doctrine of the Blood of Christ: Definition: Refers to His Spiritual, not His Physical Death

26. The saving work of Christ on the cross is represented by the phrase: τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, *to haima Iēsou tou huiou autou*: “the blood of Jesus, His Son.”
27. The word for “blood,” *haima*, refers to the literal blood of man or animal. The latter was the principle object in the expiatory sacrifice on the Day of Atonement when the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed animal on the mercy seat of the arc of the covenant in the holy of holies of the tabernacle or temple.
28. In this verse, the blood is possessed by *Iēsou tou huiou autou*: “Jesus, His Son.” What the “blood of Christ” accomplished for us is brought out by the present active indicative of the verb:

καθαρίζω, *katharizō* -

“to purify, cleanse, make clean”

present: Customary: denotes that which habitually occurs, or may be reasonably expected to occur when any believer uses rebound. This is a doctrinal principle that was true in the past, is true now, and remains true in the future. Thus, rebound is universal among the dispensations in its availability to the believer as a problem-solving device.

active: The blood of Christ produces the action of purifying believers of both presalvation and postsalvation sins.

Indicative: Declarative: a statement of doctrinal and historical fact.

Adam’s original sin is a death knell for every person who enters life. We are born condemned (κρίνω, *krinō* in John 3:18), totally depraved (see below), and desperately wicked (ἄνασ, *’anash*, in Jeremiah 17:9, incurably deceitful; desperately sick condition of the soul).

Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 7:118-19:

Depravity is a theological rather than Biblical word, which distinction indicates that the term, though not found in the Sacred Text, by so much like the words *Deity* and *Trinity*, represents a truth that is clearly taught in the Scriptures. This doctrine, furthermore, is misunderstood and often resented because of the fact that the Scripture has not been heeded or because the term *depravity* actually refers to that which God sees when He looks at fallen man and not to what man sees when he looks at himself or his fellow men. Those two grounds of misunderstanding unite in one general declaration when it is stated that depravity is what God declares that He sees, and precisely what He sees, when He looks at fallen man. The student would therefore do well to give unprejudiced and exhaustive consideration to all that is recorded in the Bible on this theme. Theologians employ also the phrase *total depravity*, which does not mean that there is nothing good in any unregenerate person as seen by himself or by other people: it means that there is nothing in fallen man which God can find pleasure in or accept.

The picture looks dark, and would be much darker still were it not for the divinely provided remedy which announces full and free salvation.

“There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10-12).

Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1986), 218-19:

Total Depravity. The scriptural evidence provides the basis for what has been commonly called total depravity. The English word “depravity” means perverted or crooked. It is not used in the translation of the *King James Version*, but some modern translations do use it to translate *adokimos* [ἀδόκιμος] in Romans 1:28. This word means “not standing the test,” and gives us a clue as to how to define the concept of depravity. Depravity means that man fails the test of pleasing God. He denotes his unmeritoriousness in God’s sight. This failure is total in that (a) it affects all aspects of man’s being, and (b) it affects all people.

The concept of total depravity does not mean (a) that every person has exhibited his depravity as thoroughly as he or she could; (b) that sinners do not have a conscience or a “native induction” concerning God; (c) that sinners will indulge in every form of sin; or (d) that depraved people do not perform actions that are good in the sight of others and even in the sight of God.

Total depravity means (a) that corruption extends to every fact of man’s nature and faculties; and (b) that there is nothing in anyone that can commend him to a righteous God.

Total depravity must always be measured against God’s holiness. Relative goodness exists in people. They can do good works which are appreciated by others. But nothing that anyone can do will gain salvational merit or favor in the sight of God.

There is no human solution to the problem. The soul of each person is ticketed for the lake of fire unless some outside agent can devise a solution to the problem.

29. Such a solution was provided even before mankind was created. A summary of the fall of angelic and human creatures is provided by:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *The Integrity of God*. 4th ed. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 2005), 299:

God created creatures with free will—beautiful, powerful creatures called angels. Their history is largely undisclosed to us, but eventually, from their own free decisions, some of these creatures rebelled—the fall of Satan and the revolt that began the angelic conflict.

God always knew that some of the angels would revolt. Therefore, in the same instant that He decreed to create the universe and the angels, He also decreed that at a certain point in time He would create another type of creature. Like the angels, this new person would have free will and would be designed to share God’s happiness. But he, and his progeny, would also become the demonstration of the fullness of God’s essence to those angels that had impugned God’s character. So, for God’s pleasure, He created Adam. Now, long after the fall of Adam, God’s pleasure is our adjustment to the justice of God. Salvation, spirituality, and spiritual maturity provide the capacity for the blessings of God.

30. Salvation is made available by means of the Person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is His substitutionary sacrifice on our behalf that sin is removed as an issue for the human race.
31. All human sin was judged in Christ and therefore sin is no longer an issue. But the sins of each member of the human race remain unforgiven unless he places his personal faith in the saving work of Christ.
32. This saving work is referred to in 1 John 1:7 as the “blood of Christ.” It is this factor that makes salvation possible and rebound an ever-present problem-solving device.
33. Therefore, to fully understand and appreciate the grace our Lord has provided us throughout our spiritual life we must define the term, “blood of Christ,” and to what aspects of His final hours on the cross it refers.
34. **The Doctrine of the Blood of Christ:**

I. Definition:

- 1) The blood of Christ is a metaphor for the saving work of Christ on the cross.
- 2) The Greek word for “blood” is **αἷμα, haima**, and it has several meanings that include both human and animal blood.

- 3) But New Testament references to the “blood of Christ” do not refer to literal blood but rather are figures of speech referring to the Lord’s atonement. This is documented by several of the leading theological references on the Koine Greek:

Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilber Gingrich. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 23:

αἷμα. *Figurative.* Blood and life as an expiatory sacrifice—especially of the blood of Jesus as a means of expiation.

Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 135, 133:

Metonymy. A figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something closely associated with it: the bottle of alcoholic drink, the press for journalism, the Oval Office for the US presidency. (p. 135)

Metalepsis. A figure that either refers us to yet another figure or requires a further imaginative leap to establish its reference, usually by a process of metonymy. (p. 133)

NOTE: We are going to find that “blood” refers us back to the Old Testament sacrifices where an animal “sheds his blood” for the sins of the Israelites. So the use of “blood” in the phrase “blood of Christ” requires an “imaginative leap to establish its reference.”

E. W. Bullinger argues that the word “blood” is also a metonymy referring to the atoning work of Christ on the cross:

Bullinger, E. W. *Figures of Speech used in the Bible.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 610-11:

In the New Testament, the expression “the blood of Christ” is the figure *Metalepsis*. It means not merely the actual blood corpuscles, neither does it mean His death as an act, but the merits of the atonement effected by it and associated with it.

Romans 3:25. “Through faith in the blood”: i.e., through faith in the merits of the atonement accomplished by it.

Romans 5:9. “Being now justified by His blood”: i.e., His atonement.

Ephesians 1:7. “Redemption through his blood”: i.e., through the merits of His atoning death.

Ephesians 2:13. “But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are brought near by the blood of Christ”: i.e., by His death, not by His life: yet not by His death alone, but by the atonement made in His obedient act in dying for His people.

1 John 1:7. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here, when it is a question of “walking in the light,” the saved sinner is reminded of that which put him there (in the light) and which alone can keep him there.

Revelation 1:5. “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood”: i.e., loosed us from our sins by His atonement.

In Revelation 1:5, “in His blood,” which is not only contrary to Old Testament type (where nothing was ever washed *in* blood which would have defiled and made unclean instead of cleansing!) but is contrary to the letter as well as the spirit of the Word. Revelation 1:5 means washed us or loosed us from our sins by, or in virtue of, through the merits of, His atonement.

So that such expressions should be avoided, as “Washed *in* the blood of the Lamb”; and the sentiment contained in the verse:

“There is a fountain filled with blood
 Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
 Lose all their guilty stains.”

—William Cowper, “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood”

All such expressions are contrary to physiology and common sense. We lose nothing of the facts, but gain immensely as to their meaning, when we understand that, by *Metalepsis*, “blood” is put for *death*, and “death” for the atonement made by it and all its infinite merits.

Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Trans. And ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:174-75:

These varied expressions [regarding those verses quoted by Bullinger above] include simple references to the fact of Christ’s death, images taken from the sphere of the law (acquittal, ransom, and the conclusion of peace), and concepts which belong to the language of sacrifice (expiation, sprinkling, purification, lamb without spot or blemish). The presence of the latter does not mean, however, that cultic notions of sacrifice are bound up with the blood of Christ. The early Christian representation of the blood of Christ as sacrificial blood is simply the metaphorical garment clothing the thought of the self-offering, the obedience to God, which Christ demonstrated in the crucifixion. The history of belief in the atoning and purifying power of the blood, especially among the Israelites and Greeks, does not help us to understand the ideas which the New Testament links with the blood of Christ, since the latter is simply a pregnant verbal symbol for the saving work of Christ.

- 4) The phrase “the blood of Christ” may therefore be defined as a figure of speech, either metonymy or metalepsis, that is a “verbal symbol” for expiation and atonement.
- 5) Atonement finds its definition in the Old Testament sacrifices where the sins of the people were covered by the sacrifice of an innocent animal. The animal’s blood confirmed his physical death on behalf of a sinful population.
- 6) On the cross it was Jesus Christ who became the fulfillment of what these sacrifices illustrated. His spiritual death on behalf of the human race resulted in the propitiation of God the Father.
- 7) The impact on the human race is that the barrier between God and man is removed through reconciliation.
- 8) The word “atonement” with reference to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross is threefold:
 - (1) The Christ-ward side of atonement is expiation: the aspect of His work that canceled the debt for the penalty of sin: spiritual death or separation from God.
 - (2) The God-ward side of atonement is propitiation: God was satisfied with the perfect Person and perfect sacrifice of Christ which resulted in Him showing mercy to the believing sinner by forgiving his presalvation sins at salvation.
 - (3) The man-ward side of atonement is reconciliation to God by the removal of the barrier of hostility that exists between God and man.
- 9) The phrase “the blood of Christ” refers to the work of Christ in paying the debt for our sins: the three hours of judgment on the cross when He was judged as a substitute for us by experiencing spiritual death: separated from God because He was being identified with our sins.
- 10) The question that now arises is, why is this referred to as “the blood of Christ?” For that answer we must examine the blood sacrifices of the Levitical offerings.