

## **“Deep Blood and Fearless Spirit”**

*Reading: Colossians 1:3-29*

Written and preached by [Luke Richards](#)

There was a man who loved working on cars, and he was *really* good at it. It seemed like he knew every part in every car he came across; no one brought him a clunker he couldn't get running again. His pride and joy was a beautiful old classic car that he had found as a heap in a junkyard and had carefully, painstakingly restored to perfection over the course of many years. That car was admired by everyone who saw it, and it had won all sorts of awards at car shows. But there was a problem: for some reason, he just could not get that car started. He had checked everything dozens of times, and every part was in place and in working order, but the car wouldn't run.

There was another man who loved to bake bread, and he, too, knew everything there was to know about bread-baking. He had read all the books. He knew all the chemistry involved in every step of breadmaking. He had dozens of specialty flours from all over the world with different characteristics to get exactly the type of bread he wanted. He had a very expensive wood-fired brick oven built in his backyard, and he had professional-grade equipment in his kitchen. For some reason, though, every time he tried baking bread, he couldn't get it to rise. Every loaf he made came out of the oven as a cracker.

There was a woman who loved gardening, and she was an expert. She had a detailed plan for her garden every year. She knew exactly when every step needed to be taken for perfect results. She prepared the soil exactly as it should be for every plant she wanted. She pulled weeds, she fertilized, she put fences up, she had signs for each row of plants and garden gnomes and everything, and every year at the beginning of the season, her garden was perfectly ready. But by the end of the season, she never had any plants grow.

The man who worked on cars had a problem with his perfect classic car that wouldn't run: he never put any gas in the tank. The man who knew everything about baking perfect bread had a similarly basic problem with his bread, and that was that he never put any yeast in it. And again, with the woman who knew everything about the perfect garden, the reason she never had any plants in her garden was because she never planted any seeds.

Now of course it's not very realistic for people to be experts in car repairs, breadmaking, and gardening and not realize that they need basic things like gasoline, yeast, and seeds, but as we keep focusing on this desire we have as a church toward becoming deep, beautiful, and fearless people of Jesus Christ, we need to be continually reminded of the basics. You can be an expert at the advanced stuff, but it doesn't matter if you don't have the basics down as well. We've talked a lot over the last several weeks about different things we can do to take hold of our own spiritual lives, because that's a big part of going deeper. Immature people aren't usually deep, and maturity means being able to feed and grow and take care of yourself. But at the same time, the central claim of Christianity is that we do not save ourselves; God does everything. We've talked about the importance of prayer, simplicity, generosity, community, hospitality, and worship over the last several weeks, and as life-changing as those things can be, we have to come back around to the fact that they are ultimately only preparing the soil, kneading the bread, or changing the oil. They are not the seed that brings life, or the yeast that brings growth, or the gasoline that brings movement.

If you're anything like me, you spend about half your time coming up with great intentions for what you want to get done and what sort of person you want to become, and then you spend the other half of your time feeling disappointed and guilty because you failed spectacularly at following through with those intentions. You've probably seen cartoons where a character will be tempted to do something, and a little angel will appear on one shoulder acting as their conscience, while a little demon will appear on the other shoulder to tempt them. That's really not so far from how we are, is it? It's amazing how we're able to be different people at different times, even to the point of surprising ourselves. Humans have always been simultaneously capable of great good and great evil. We can build magnificent cathedrals one day and festering slums the next. There is nothing that we cannot turn into art, and there is nothing that we cannot corrupt. The internet is one of the most significant technological advances of our time, and we have used it to push the boundaries of knowledge and science and justice. We also use it as a tool for sex trafficking, pornography, exploitation, and bullying. The last century saw the advent of nuclear technology, which held the promise of powering our world and the threat of destroying it.

Maybe you remember that passage in the book of Romans, where Paul describes the mentality of the average person who doesn't know Christ. He talks about how we want to do good things, but we don't do them, and we don't want to do bad things, but we do them anyway. It's not that we're completely incapable of doing anything good, it's just that most of us can't do it consistently or predictably. So even the most disciplined among us, even those who are spiritual masters, even when we take steps forward in prayer, or generosity, or hospitality, we will still from time to time find ourselves slipping back into those old patterns of selfishness and rebellion against God. As we advance, our enemy also works to find new ways of tripping us up. We do not save ourselves; God does everything. We can prepare the soil, but God plants the seed. We can knead the bread, but God provides the yeast. We can polish the chrome, but God fills the tank.

All of the spiritual disciplines in the world will only prepare the soil. All the good deeds in the world will only prepare the soil. All the kind thoughts, nice words, and religious rituals in the world will only prepare the soil. We cannot make ourselves deep people; it is knowing God deeply that makes us deep. We cannot make ourselves beautiful people; it is the process of receiving the grace of God and being grateful for it that makes us beautiful people. We cannot drive out fear on our own, because we cannot conquer death on our own; it is God who defeats death and sets us free from fear. None of these spiritual acts in our lives are ends in themselves; they are simply tools to help us know God better. And if we put into practice "religious," "spiritual" acts without connecting them to a relationship with the living God, we're wasting our time.

God Himself is the power behind a changed life. God Himself is the one who crafts us into deep, beautiful, fearless people. The most important thing for us to remember is that He does this through the deep blood of Jesus Christ and the fearless Holy Spirit of Christ. His blood is deep enough for each one of us, no matter what we have done, and His Spirit is fearless enough to transform anyone. This week, this Holy Week, is our retelling and reliving the story of when everything changed because the blood of Christ was given and the way was opened for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God.

So if we want to become deep people, the first step, the last step, and most of the steps in between is for us to come to the deep blood of Jesus Christ. Why the blood of Christ? What is it about the death of Jesus that is so powerful? Paul makes a couple of comments in our reading from Colossians 1 that give us some guidance. He talks about how Jesus has rescued us from the dominion of darkness. His death can break the power of sin in our lives and set us free from hell. Jesus died to bring a new kingdom to us, the kingdom of God, so that we could reject the kingdom of hell and have a new Lord. Paul also talks about how Jesus made peace through His blood between us and God, so that we would no longer have to be enemies of God. Again, it's a change of loyalties, so that instead of being rebels against the King, we can become His children. It is this singular event, the death of Christ, that we claim as the power of God displayed for all of creation.

So why do I refer to His blood as being deep? Because the blood of Christ is deep enough to cover you, no matter what you have done. Sometimes we forget that. Some people get holier-than-thou and forget how deep their own problems have been, and they look at other people as though they're too bad to be saved. Other people look at their own sin and think it's too deep, and Jesus' blood can't possibly save scum like *me*. But the blood of Christ is deep enough to cover you, no matter what you have done. Deep people recognize how bad their own sins really are, and they know what sort of evil they are capable of committing, and they know that they are forgiven in the blood of Christ. Deep people know how deep the blood of Christ is, and therefore they are able to look at every other person — no matter what they look like or what they've done — and can see that the blood is deep enough for them. If we're going to be deep people, we need to keep coming back to the blood. We need to bring our sins, whatever they are, and wash them in the deep blood of Jesus Christ. If we do not do this regularly — if we refuse to recognize the depth of our own sin — we will get stuck, and our growth will be stunted, and we will fail to see the depth of the blood.

As we recognize our need for the deep blood of Christ, we also see our need for His fearless Holy Spirit. In Colossians, Paul speaks of the Spirit filling us with knowledge of God's will and enabling us to live a life worthy of our Lord and to bear fruit through our actions. This is one of the beautiful promises of the gospel, that we do not only have hope for our afterlife, we also have hope for a changed life now by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us. The blood sets us free from death, while the Spirit gives us life. The blood redeems us from being sinners, while the Spirit empowers us to be saints. The blood is Christ's life given for us, while the Spirit is Christ's life *in* us. The Spirit lives within every Christian from the moment they give their life to Christ, but it's clear from the Bible that there can be times when the Spirit fills us to overflowing, soaking us in His presence and power just as thoroughly as the waters of baptism soak us. This is the power of God offered to us, to have Him present in our lives in a way that allows us to be a new creation.

We do not save ourselves through our own spirituality or religious practices. We're not saved because we are deep, beautiful, fearless people. We are saved by the work of God, and as He saves us, He transforms us. It's important for us to remember this while we are taking these steps forward in our spiritual lives, because the deep blood and the fearless Spirit remind us that we'd better not allow any sort of spiritual pride to creep into our lives, and we don't have to give in to spiritual despair at our own failures, either. His blood is deep enough for anyone, even the people you think don't deserve it. His Spirit is powerful enough to transform anyone, even if you think they're too far gone. So as we take these steps forward, we do so grateful for God's pure grace, His pure gift of goodness,

His salvation that He offers us that we can never deserve, and therefore we have hope even for the world's worst sinner.

Not one of us is so old, so young, or so holy that we do not need to come back to the blood of Christ and be cleansed from sin and temptation. Not one of us is so worthless or so perfect that we cannot ask for a new filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The blood is deep enough for you, and the Spirit is powerful enough for you. Today, as we begin the journey into Holy Week, in this last stretch of Lent before Good Friday and Easter, we have the deep blood of Christ available to us in a special way. Today we celebrate the Lord's Supper together in remembrance of the Last Supper Jesus celebrated with His disciples before He was betrayed, in anticipation of the Great Feast that Jesus will share with us when His kingdom is complete, and in recognition of our need for His powerful healing presence with us now and through all our days.



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