

BLOOD WORK

HOW *the* BLOOD *of* CHRIST
ACCOMPLISHES OUR SALVATION



ANTHONY J. CARTER

Endorsements

“Christians tend to speak of the blood of Christ either flippantly or not at all. However, in *Blood Work*, Anthony Carter helps us see that neither of these options is appropriate. The blood of Christ is a central biblical theme that deserves to be pondered deeply. Carter forces us to consider Christ’s atoning sacrifice and its many implications. In the end, we are left with a glorious, cross-centered, Christ-centered gospel that gets to the heart of our great need and God’s great provision. We are indeed purchased, redeemed, brought near, cleansed, sanctified, and freed by the blood of Christ. In a day awash with self-help books, it is refreshing to be reminded that we indeed cannot help ourselves, but God, through the blood of Christ, has done more than help us; He has saved us. Thank God for the blood!”

—DR. VODDIE BAUCHAM JR.

Dean of seminary, African Christian University
Lusaka, Zambia

“This book will leave you in awe of the benefits of trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. It is unquestionably thorough, remarkably captivating, and surprisingly clear. You’ll leave this book singing, ‘Nothing but the blood of Jesus.’”

—REV. BRYAN LORITTS

Lead pastor, Abundant Life Christian Fellowship
Silicon Valley, Calif.

“*Blood Work* is both theologically rich and devotional. Anthony Carter presents a refreshing pastoral reminder of what the believer has been given through the finished work of Christ Jesus. This is a must read for the new believer, as well as for those who are well into the spiritual journey.”

—DR. ROBERT H. ORNER
Lead pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church
Cherry Hill, N.J.

“Salvation is possible only because of the shed blood of Christ. Tony Carter helps us to better understand and appreciate the full significance of this great sacrifice. This book will set Christ’s sacrifice before you and allow you to view it from angles you’ve not seen before and others you may have seen but not fully appreciated. This is a great compact book that goes deep on a subject we can’t talk about enough and for which we will never be able to thank God enough.”

—REV. VERMON PIERRE
Lead pastor, Roosevelt Community Church
Phoenix

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ANTHONY J. CARTER

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To Christina

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A DONOR FOR CHRISTINA

We were used to seeing delivery trucks come to the house. Being lovers of books, we regularly (sometimes daily) received packages from UPS or FedEx. So, when the FedEx truck pulled into the driveway one day, it was nothing out of the ordinary. However, as the driver walked to the door, it became clear that something was different this time. Rather than a package, he carried a letter.

Instead of coming from some online bookstore or publishing company, the delivery was from an organization known as “Be the Match.” I had never heard of Be the Match and could not but wonder why it needed to send a letter to me in an overnight express envelope. I opened the envelope, not knowing what to expect except the unexpected. As I read the letter, my expectations were met, and then some. The letter read something like this:

Dear Mr. Carter:

We are writing to inform you that you have been identified as a possible match as a donor for a bone-marrow transplant patient. It is urgent that you contact us so we can confirm whether you are a complete match.

I was bewildered. How could I be a match for anyone? I didn't recall donating blood or signing up for a bone-marrow registry. Besides, how does one get on such a registry? I know the Internet is capable of hijacking a lot of our personal information, but can it get our blood types as well?

As I pondered the possibilities, something came to me. The only event I could remotely connect to the moment had happened more than eighteen years before. Back then, I had participated in a blood drive organized to find a bone-marrow match for a dear friend of ours. Could this unexpected letter be the result of my donating blood eighteen years prior? Even if it was, how had Be the Match found me eighteen years, two states, and six addresses later?

The year was 1994. Robert and Winnie Benson were friends of ours. Robert served as the associate pastor of the church we attended. They were faithful servants of God and parents to four children—a son and three daughters. Their middle daughter's name was Christina. In 1992, she had been diagnosed with leukemia. Christina was 9 years old. The sickness was unexpected and obviously life-altering.

After several treatments of chemotherapy, a hopeful remission of nearly two years, and a lot of prayer, the doctors determined

that Christina would need a bone-marrow transplant if she was to survive. Unfortunately, no one in her family was a match for her. Therefore, the circle of potential marrow donors needed to be enlarged.

The call went out for a blood drive to be held at the church in March 1994. The response was tremendous. Not only did the church members come out in great numbers, so did people who lived in the surrounding community, and many more who had heard of young Christina's sickness. I was one of hundreds who donated blood that day (and apparently became part of a registry of individuals desiring to offer blood to save another's life). The day was filled with hope and anticipation. There was excitement and fervent prayer. Surely, out of all those people, someone would be identified as a donor for Christina. Unfortunately, the excitement of that day was overshadowed by the sobering news we received in the coming weeks—no match had been found.

With no match and the cancer taking more and more of her strength, it was only a matter of time. Christians around the world offered prayers. Christina battled the illness bravely and with a joy that humbled all who knew her. Nevertheless, to our dismay, Christina died on April 26, 1997. A Spirit-filled warrior to the end, her smile and consistent faith testified to the grace and love of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She was welcomed into the rapturous presence of Christ because His blood did what our blood could not do—save her. Christina was 12 years old.

As I read over the letter from Be the Match again, I was not sure what to do. Many questions came to mind: What is the process for such a thing? What will it require of me? Will it hurt?

Who would receive the transplant from me? I hesitated to do it. How many people receive these notices every day and never give them a second thought? Besides, who has time for a drawn-out process and possible hospitalization for a period of time? Excuses and reasons for not responding to this letter flooded my mind. If I never responded, who would know?

Then it occurred to me: What would Christina want me to do? If someone had been a match for Christina, what would I have wanted him to do? What if it was my wife, son, or daughter who stood in need? How would I feel about a potential donor who ignored a request to save my wife or daughter? The decision was made. I quickly called and made an appointment for blood to be drawn and tests to be conducted.

At the local clinic, I did not know what to expect. The attending nurse, upon seeing my paperwork and noticing that I was being tested for a possible bone-marrow transplant, was amazed. She informed me that the majority of people ignore notices like the one I had received; she rarely saw anyone follow through with a request. I was shocked. Surely, I thought, the opportunity to offer life-saving assistance to another is something many of us would welcome with enthusiasm. Sadly, this is not the case.

Unfortunately, after the blood was drawn and the tests were conducted, it was determined that I was not a match. Honestly, I was a little disappointed. The idea of saving someone's life had grown on me. Nevertheless, my name remains on the registry, and I could receive another overnight express envelope any day.

As I went through that dramatic ordeal, it was impressed upon me just how precious blood is. It literally is the difference

between life and death. But even though my blood could potentially save the temporal life of one, how many more can be saved unto eternal life by the precious blood of Jesus? If I could give my blood and by doing so give life to another, how much more life can the blood of Jesus give? These thoughts led to the book you hold in your hands. Consider it a celebration of the life-giving, soul-blessing, power-enduing blood of Jesus.

This book is dedicated to Christina, because God used her to remind me that life is truly in the blood. Temporally, it is in the blood running through our veins. Eternally, it is in the sin-breaking, guilt-removing, incomparable, inestimably valuable blood of Jesus Christ.

It is my prayer that as you read, you will be encouraged to sing with new meaning:

*O precious is the flow
That makes us white as snow.
No other fount I know.
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.¹*

One

OUR BLOODY RELIGION

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.²*

—WILLIAM COWPER

It has been said that Christianity is a bloody religion. Critics usually make this accusation, pointing to the wars, inquisitions, trials, and executions carried out over the years in the name of Christianity. We must admit that blood has been wrongly shed in the name of so-called Christianity, but Christianity would be a bloody religion regardless. It is a bloody religion not because of the blood shed by people in wars and inquisitions, but because of the blood shed by Jesus Christ.

What is blood? Blood is the life-giving and life-maintaining

fluid that circulates through the body's heart, arteries, veins, and capillaries. Here are some interesting and important facts about blood:

- The average person's blood is approximately 8 percent of his body weight.
- Healthy kidneys recycle four hundred gallons of blood every day.
- The average woman has about 4.5 liters of blood in her body. The average man has about 5.5.
- Because blood leaves an indelible stain, Native Americans used it for paint.
- During the early nineteenth century, it was believed that riding on a carousel would improve blood circulation.
- One out of every seven people entering the hospital needs blood.
- Someone needs blood every two seconds.
- One pint of blood can save three lives.

Here is an undeniable and important fact: *Blood gives and maintains lives.*

Christians should know this better than others. In the preface to the book *Precious Blood*, Richard Phillips writes, "At the very heart of our Christian faith is a precious red substance; the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ."³ To read the Bible with any seriousness and sober discernment is to see the shedding of blood or

the implications of it on practically every page. If the history of redemption is a story told in pictures, the blood of Christ is the paint with which that story is portrayed.

The history of Christianity is filled with blood. More than anything else, the Bible speaks of the blood of Christ accomplishing for us the grand benefits that belong to salvation: We have been purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28). We have propitiation by His blood (Rom. 3:25). We have been justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). We have redemption through His blood (Eph. 1:7). We who were afar off have been brought near by His blood (Eph. 2:13). We have peace through His blood (Col. 1:20). Our consciences are cleansed by His blood (Heb. 9:14). We are sanctified through His blood (Heb. 13:12). We are elect in His blood (1 Peter 1:1–2). We are ransomed by His blood (1 Peter 1:18–19). We have been set free from sin by His blood (Rev. 1:5). These and many other benefits remind us that the blood of Christ is central to all we are as a redeemed people. Therefore, we will consider each of these benefits chapter by chapter.

In examining and explaining the meaning of the blood of Christ, the seventeenth-century Puritan Stephen Charnock wrote:

By this is meant the last act in the tragedy of his life, his blood being the ransom of our souls, the price of our redemption, and the expiation of our sin. The shedding of his blood was the highest and most excellent part of his obedience (Phil. 2:8). His whole life was a continual suffering, but his death was the top and complement of

his obedience, for in that he manifested the greatest love to God and the highest charity to man.⁴

The significance of the blood of Jesus also can be seen in how frequently it is mentioned. In fact, “the ‘blood’ of Christ is mentioned in the writings of the New Testament nearly three times as often as ‘the cross’ of Christ and five times as frequently as the ‘death’ of Christ.”⁵

Therefore, it should not be surprising that as recipients of God’s gracious salvation through the person and work of Christ, we preach, pray, and even sing of the wonderful power of His blood, as the popular hymn by William Cowper demonstrates:

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;|
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.*⁶

The Bible speaks of the blood of Christ as affecting and impacting everything we do as a community of faith. In fact, not only do we preach, pray, and sing the blood of Jesus, we even participate in it.

When we come to the Lord’s Table and receive Communion, the Bible reminds us, the cup we receive is the blood of Christ. The language, in fact, is that of fellowship: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a *participation* in the blood of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16, emphasis added). The word translated as “participation” is the Greek word *koinonia*, which also means

“fellowship.” It is a description of our communion with one another (Acts 2:42) and of our union with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). Our union and communion are through the blood of Christ. The Lord’s Table is the visible reminder of the blessing we have in union with Jesus. The richness of the symbolism should not be underestimated. Pastor and theologian Joel Beeke writes, “In the Lord’s Supper, we partake of the full Christ, feasting on him and his benefits both mentally and spiritually.”⁷

Obviously, Christians do not drink the literal blood of Christ when they take the cup of wine at Communion. However, there is much to be understood and received as we hear Christ say, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:28; see Luke 22:20). The poignancy of these words should grip and encourage our hearts every time we hear them. The cup of blessing is a visible and tangible reminder that we are in Christ and Christ in us. It reminds us of the intimate and inseparable union we share with Him. His life and death are ours because His body was broken for us and His blood was shed for us. We are His and He is ours. His blood sealed our union with Him. Every time we come to the Lord’s Table, we should be reminded of this wonderful truth.

Why So Much Blood?

Blood runs throughout the Bible. The inevitable question is, “Why so much blood?” It is because there is so much sin in the world. The shedding of blood is the result of sin. In Genesis 9:4, we are told that life is in the blood. If life is in the blood and the

blood represents life, then the loss or shedding of blood represents death.⁸

We have no record of the shedding of blood, and no mention of death, before Adam and Eve sinned. But when they committed the greatest of all cosmic treason, they brought not just sin upon the human family, but also death, the shedding of blood.

Consequently, Romans 5:12 reminds us that sin came into the world by Adam, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men. Sin brought death, and thus the shedding of blood. In fact, it seems God caused the first blood to be shed in response to Adam and Eve's sin. In Genesis 3:21, the Bible says that God, moved by mercy and compassion, made garments of animal skins for Adam and Eve. The implication is that God sacrificed an animal to clothe the man and his wife. Perhaps He even killed the animal before their eyes to demonstrate to them the awful cost of their sin.

If the death of the animal was not demonstrative enough for Adam and Eve, it was not long before death, even the shedding of blood, came right to their home and touched their family in ways they had never imagined. The first instance of the shedding of human blood is recorded in Genesis 4, where we read the tragic story of Adam and Eve's first two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain killed Abel and spilled his blood on the earth. Ironically, Cain's sin was the shedding of Abel's blood, and yet the shedding of blood is the only means by which sin can be removed. In other words, without sin there would be no shedding of blood, but likewise the Bible reminds us that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). Consequently,

in the Scriptures, blood speaks to the need for both retribution and redemption.

Blood Speaks

Consider the death of Abel. As chapter 4 of Genesis begins, we read:

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it." Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. (Gen. 4:1-8)

After Cain, full of anger and envy, rose up and murdered Abel, God came to Cain and asked him the whereabouts of his younger brother. Cain essentially said to God: "Why are you

asking me? I'm not responsible for him." God said that not only was Cain responsible for Abel, but Abel's blood was on Cain's hands. In fact, God told Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" (v. 10).

Once again, Adam and Eve and their family experienced the penalty for sin, this time in the form of the first human death. Sadly, this death was not that of an intruder, of an escaping criminal, or of a soldier on the battlefield. The horror is that a brother murdered a brother. The wickedness of Cain demonstrated the depth of human depravity and sin.

Cain brought his sacrifice to God, but God refused to accept it. Unlike Abel's sacrifice, Cain's was not made in faith (Heb. 11:4) and lacked a blood atonement for sin. As we have seen, God had established the need for blood atonement, as He had sacrificed an animal to make coverings for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). Commentator and pastor James Montgomery Boice writes:

Abel's sacrifice involved blood and therefore testified to the death of a substitute. He was coming to God as God had shown he must be approached. When God killed animals in the Garden of Eden and then clothed Adam and Eve with their skins, God was showing that, because sin means death, innocent victims must die in order that sinners might be pardoned. The sacrifice pointed forward to Christ. When Abel came with the offering of blood he was believing God and was looking forward to the provision of the deliverer. When Cain brought his fruit he was rejecting that provision.⁹

Since Cain's sacrifice lacked blood, he decided to use Abel's blood. It was as if he were saying, "God, if you want blood, I'll give you blood!" Abel's faithful sacrifice of a lamb cried out to God for redemption. Cain's wicked sacrifice of Abel cried out for revenge. When the blood of Abel hit the ground, it began to cry out, and God heard it. It cried out for revenge. It cried out for restitution. It cried out for the wrong to be righted. It provided the damning testimony for Cain's condemnation. Cain was guilty of the sin of murder. The blood of Abel stood against him, a stain that Cain could not remove.

Although Abel's blood cried loudly and clearly, it spoke insufficiently. The New Testament tells us, however, that the blood of Christ speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24). While Abel's blood cried out for revenge and retribution, the blood of Christ cries out for redemption. When the blood of Jesus hit the ground, it cried not for revenge but for the redemption of the world. As one contemporary songwriter has put it:

*Your blood speaks a better word
than all the empty claims
I've heard upon the earth.
Speaks righteousness for me.
It stands in my defense.
Jesus, it's your blood.*¹⁰

This is the power of the blood of Christ in the life of the redeemed. When we behold the blood of Christ, when we have

been washed in that blood, our lives are marked out not by revenge but by redemption. How do we know that someone understands the blood of Christ in his life? We know it by the fact that he or she is not out for revenge, but is living out redemption.

It is disheartening to hear Christians, who claim that the blood of Christ has spoken their redemption, speak of revenge. They often feel the need to right every wrong word spoken or wrong deed done against them. Yet, the Bible clearly states in Romans 12:19, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”

At times, we thoughtlessly say, “I just have to get it off of my chest.” Or we say, “O, she’s going to get hers.” However, as a Christian, my cry should never be for revenge, but for redemption. I do not want revenge on my enemies; I want their redemption. I should not pray for their destruction but for their conversion. Why? Because I am covered with the blood of Christ! The blood of Christ speaks a better, a more blessed word than my cry for revenge could ever speak. It says that I am redeemed, and others can be redeemed, too. It says that God did not take His wrath out on me, and thus I should not take mine out on others. Instead of crying for revenge, I must rest in the blood of Christ for redemption. His blood cries out with a louder and more penetrating voice.

Yet, the blood of Christ does more than just cry out—it accomplishes the redemption it proclaims. In the Old Testament, blood spoke loudly. From the murder of Abel to the red-washed doorposts of Israelite homes in Egypt to the sacrificial offerings of bulls and goats by the priests, blood shouted the need for a

Redeemer from the penalty of sin and the pangs of death. In Christ, that Redeemer has come. Through the shedding of His blood, Christ redeemed, once and for all, those who trust and call on Him for salvation. Once and for all, the word of His blood, the word of redemption, speaks on our behalf and declares us free from sin and death. No word in the Scriptures is as loud. No word is as clear. No word is as sweet. It is no wonder we sing:

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child, and forever, I am!*¹¹

The blood of the Old Testament spoke, but Christ's blood speaks better. In speaking, it also satisfies.

Blood Satisfies

The Bible is full of epochal events, those grand, earth-altering instances that stand out as high points of redemptive history. In the Old Testament, no event is so dramatic and game-changing as Israel's redemption from Egypt.

In redeeming Israel, God pulled out all the stops. He turned the Nile River to blood. He darkened the sun so that the land was engulfed in perpetual night. He sent an infestation of frogs. If the Egyptians thought that was tolerable, He sent an infestation of gnats (that would have gotten my attention). For those who thought the gnats were not that bad, He sent an infestation of

flies (okay, I give up). In all, God sent ten devastating, debilitating, and deathly plagues.

The last plague was the most horrific. God swore to kill the firstborn of every creature in Egypt, including the house of Pharaoh (Ex. 11:4 ff.). So awesome would be the judgment that even the firstborn of Israel would perish unless the Israelites obeyed the commands of God.

To avert the judgment, God commanded every household of Israel to select a male lamb without blemish, kill it, and smear the blood on the doorposts of the house. Then God said: “The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt” (Ex. 12:13).

We must remember that God’s wrath was not against Egypt alone for its sin and idolatry, but against Israel as well. God is not a respecter of persons when it comes to the judgment of sin. His judgment was going to wreak havoc not only on the Egyptians but also on the people of Israel—unless they figuratively covered themselves in blood by literally covering their doorposts with it.

What did the blood of the lambs do? It turned away God’s wrath and appeased His anger against sin. It satisfied His justice. The blood of the lambs caused God to pass over each house—for a time. The blood satisfied on the night of the Passover, but each year the sacrifices of the lambs had to be made anew. Every year, the sounds of the slaughter of lambs for sacrifices could be heard. For this reason, Israel always longed for an unblemished male lamb who would take away sin once and for all; the One about

whom God would say finally, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you *forever*.”

When the Lord Jesus Christ came on the scene, He was announced as the Lamb of God who not only takes away our sin (John 1:29) but also turns away God’s wrath against us. In fact, 1 Corinthians 5:7 states it plainly to us: “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

The Israelites lived because of the blood of the lambs that were slain. If you are in Christ, you live because of the blood of the Lamb of God. In the blood of Christ, we have what we lost in Adam, namely, life. The shedding of our Savior’s blood was significant not for the blood itself but for what it represents. It represents the perfect, sinless life of Christ poured out unto death for us (Isa. 53:12).

Yet, if all that needed to happen was for Jesus to shed some blood, He could have pricked His finger and placed some blood on the cross or let it spill on the ground, and all would have been well. His precious blood signified His precious life and His precious death. Consequently, the redeemed do not receive a blood transfusion from God. We receive a life transfusion—His death for our death, His life for our life. It all is according to His precious blood, which satisfies God’s righteous requirements for life and justice.

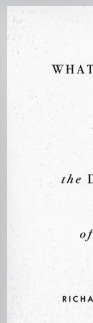
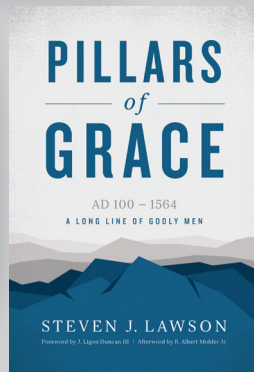
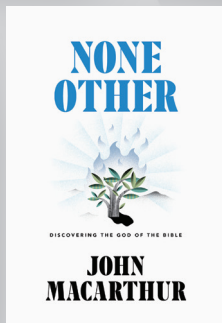
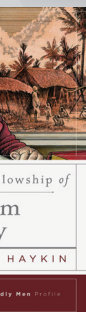
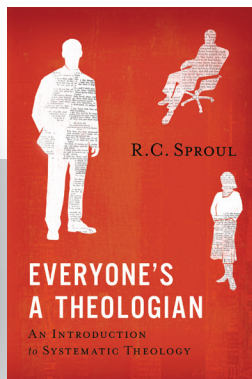
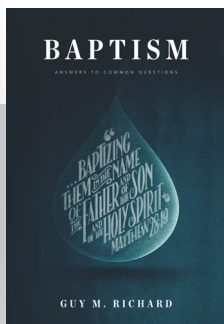
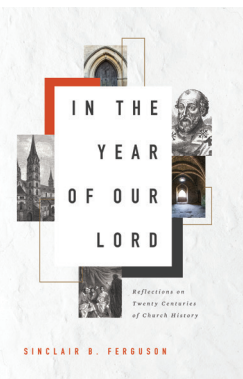
Blood in the Old Testament spoke and satisfied. But it did not speak or satisfy well enough. It took the coming of the spotless Lamb of God, whose eternal blood is called precious, priceless, and powerful, to speak and satisfy finally.

In the following pages, allow the Scriptures to show you just how precious the Bible declares our Lord’s blood to be. Let it

show you the immediate and eternal blessings that are given to those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. His blood not only speaks and satisfies, it is totally sufficient. It is no wonder we can sing:

*O precious blood, which makes us clean,
We trust in it only this hour.
And by our Savior's sacrifice
Now over me sin has lost its power.¹²*

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BLESSINGS

through the Blood

Christians often sing and preach about the blessed blood of Christ and the wonderful things it accomplishes for believers. To the uninformed ear, such language can convey the idea that Jesus' blood had semi-magical qualities. Actually, Jesus' blood was normal human blood, but the Bible refers to it in metaphorical terms to portray the many benefits that come to Christians because of Jesus' death.

In *Blood Work: How the Blood of Christ Accomplishes Our Salvation*, Rev. Anthony J. Carter traces this theme through the New Testament, showing how the biblical writers used the powerful metaphor of the blood of Jesus to help Christians grasp the treasures Jesus secured for them in His death on the cross. In doing so, Rev. Carter provides a fresh perspective on the atonement Jesus made.

Rev. Carter delves into the New Testament's teaching on several of the blessings that flow to believers because of the blood of Jesus, from their "purchase" by the blood (Acts 20:28) to their "freedom" through the blood (Rev. 1:5). Christian readers' eyes will be opened to the depth of their blessedness in Jesus and their hearts will be moved to thank and praise the triune God for such a great salvation.

ANTHONY J. CARTER serves as the lead pastor of East Point Church in the Atlanta area. He holds a bachelor's degree from Atlanta Christian College (now Point University) and a master's degree in biblical studies from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Fla. He is author of *On Being Black and Reformed: A New Perspective on the African-American Christian Experience* and *Running from Mercy: Jonah and the Surprising Story of God's Unstoppable Grace*.



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