

## This Man's Blood is on Us

### Acts 5:12, 17-32 (HCSB)

<sup>12</sup> Many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. By common consent they would all meet in Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>17</sup> Then the high priest took action. He and all his colleagues, those who belonged to the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. <sup>18</sup> So they arrested the apostles and put them in the city jail. <sup>19</sup> But an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail during the night, brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Go and stand in the temple complex, and tell the people all about this life." <sup>21</sup> In obedience to this, they entered the temple complex at daybreak and began to teach. When the high priest and those who were with him arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin—the full Senate of the sons of Israel—and sent orders to the jail to have them brought. <sup>22</sup> But when the temple police got there, they did not find them in the jail, so they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup> "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing in front of the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" <sup>24</sup> As the commander of the temple police and the chief priests heard these things, they were baffled about them, as to what could come of this. <sup>25</sup> Someone came and reported to them, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple complex and teaching the people." <sup>26</sup> Then the commander went with the temple police and brought them in without force, because they were afraid the people might stone them. <sup>27</sup> After they brought them in, they had them stand before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest asked, <sup>28</sup> "Didn't we strictly order you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to bring this man's blood on us!" <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men." <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging Him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted this man to His right hand as ruler and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Would you ever kill someone? It's a question that I'm guessing that we don't regularly ponder, but that we do at some point in time. For me, the first time I really thought about this question was when I turned 18 and had to register for Selective Services. As soon as I got that form in the mail, I thought about whether or not I could kill someone in service to my country if I were to be drafted. Others of you have maybe pondered this question at the same time I did or when you first thought about joining the military, when you got your conceal and carry permit. The question gets easier to answer as you think about self-defense, protecting loved ones, protecting our country, protecting our freedoms. But I don't know if you have ever had to answer that question. The more I thought about it, the more I pondered how it might change me, what it would do to me. Could I live with the fact of having ended someone's life, even if it was an accident or I did it for the right reasons? How would I look at myself if someone's blood was on me?

The men of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council led by the high priest, were forced to contemplate this question. As they heard the apostles' message about Jesus, they had to deal with the apostles' accusation: you murdered Jesus by hanging him on a tree! (verse 30) The Sanhedrin defended themselves. "You are determined to bring this man's blood on us!" (verse 27) "You keep trying to pin Jesus' crucifixion on us, make us feel guilty for doing this. No. We forbid you to teach in this name and make these slanderous accusations against us." Thinking that they were doing the right thing, thinking that they were preserving the true religion, the men of the Sanhedrin "arrested the apostles and put them in the city jail." (verse 18).

So quickly the members of the Sanhedrin had forgotten their crimes. They had been there when Jesus was sentenced to death. They ordered and carried out the mock trial - the illegal, convened at night, not waiting a full 24 hours from the arrest until the trial and also not waiting another day before carrying out the execution. They were the ones leading the shouts among the crowd on Good Friday, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pontius Pilate washed his hands of the situation, wanted everyone to know that he was innocent of spilling Jesus' blood, but the crowd that the Sanhedrin had riled up was adamant. They demanded Jesus' crucifixion saying, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:25) They wanted credit for this kill. They wanted to be known as the people who killed Jesus. This is what they wanted. Jesus' blood was on them.

Now, though, hearing the apostles bring it up again and again, they wanted this over. Instead of spending time trying to figure out how the apostles escaped jail, the Sanhedrin called them in again and questioned them in this way: "Didn't we strictly order you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to bring this man's blood on us!" (verse 28) Don't try to put this on us! You can't make us guilty of Jesus' blood.

The apostles famously replied, "We must obey God rather than men." (verse 29) They were not about to stop bringing the blood of Jesus on others. Several times after Jesus' resurrection and ascension the apostles had preached sermons that directly accused their

hearers of being the ones who killed Jesus, of being the ones who put him on that cross to die. They would not stop bringing Jesus' blood upon them. The Sanhedrin had killed Jesus!

It was a bold statement, to be sure, but it was one from which the apostles excluded no one. They even accused themselves. Although they were not a part of the crowd that cried, "Crucify him!" they recognized that they caused Jesus' death on account of their sins. Scripture tells us, "[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins." (Romans 4:25) The apostles knew Jesus' blood was on them too. They had sinned against Jesus, against God. They had deserted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. They didn't believe the women when they rushed back from the empty tomb telling them that Jesus was alive, reminding them that Jesus even prophesied that he would die and would rise again in three days. They thought that what the women were saying was nonsense. Thomas didn't believe his fellow apostles when they told him that Jesus had appeared to them that very first Easter Sunday in that locked room. No, Thomas said he wouldn't believe unless he put his fingers in Jesus' nail holes. Their desertion, their unbelief, their wavering in faith was sin, sin which caused Jesus to be delivered over to death. The apostles killed Jesus.

Here we are two millennia removed from those events. We weren't there when they shouted, "Crucify him!" We probably didn't even have ancestors there. I didn't have any part of Jesus' death. I didn't kill him. I didn't consent with the execution. I would never be a part of killing Jesus. I didn't desert him like the apostles did. I didn't make a demand for Jesus to prove himself to me like Thomas did. I don't think that God's Word is nonsense. I'm not like them. I didn't kill Jesus. You can't put his blood on me!

Do you ever recount your personal sins, the wrongs you have committed? Do you enumerate them in moments of silence, maybe during the time for confession in our public worship? Do you look back on all the ways that you messed up? Do you see your failings? Have you ever felt hostility towards God, that he let you down, that he abandoned you, that he cursed you? Do you recognize your sins?

When you step back and recount your sins, you know that the list is depressingly long. Our sins, just like with the apostles, just like with the Sanhedrin, caused Jesus to be delivered over to death. I killed Jesus. You killed Jesus. His blood is on us, just as it was on the apostles, just as it was on the members of the Sanhedrin.

Jesus' blood being on us is not a message meant only to make us feel guilty. After Jesus was killed, "God exalted this man to His right hand as ruler and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (verse 31) Jesus blood on you has now changed you in a different way. You are sorry for your sins causing Jesus' death. You want to change. Jesus' blood makes that happen.

Jesus "has set us free from our sins by His blood." (Revelation 1:5) His blood on us lifts our guilt from us. His blood washes our blood-stained hands and makes them clean. His blood on us covers over all of our wrongs. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18) Can you believe it? God has forgiven you and me for killing Jesus! Jesus' blood is on us and by that blood he forgives us. You and I have peace with God because Jesus' blood is on us. This miracle is even greater than the angel of the Lord who released the apostles from prison to preach this message.

This is why Peter and the apostles were so bold as to go out to the temple and continue preaching as they had, to continue to tell people that Jesus' blood is on them. They know that one day all people will see Jesus coming again with the clouds. "Every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him. And all the families of the earth will mourn over Him. This is certain." (Revelation 1:7) Peter and the apostles wanted the Sanhedrin and all people to know that they are forgiven by that same blood that they are responsible for shedding. Jesus' blood on them, on us, purifies all people from every single one of our sins. Jesus blood releases us from our guilt of what our sins made Jesus go through. Jesus' blood purified all people from their doubting, their lack of faith, their desertion. Jesus' blood on us is the key to conquer death, the key to keep hell locked and heaven open.

Jesus' blood on us makes us bold to continue telling others about him, serving as his witnesses, just like the apostles did. By the work of the Holy Spirit, we know that Christ did indeed rise from the dead. Even though he shed his blood unto death, he came back to life. His blood on us forgives our sins. We cannot contain this great news. God, by his blood, has made us priests, proclaimers of his death and resurrection. His blood is on us. His blood forgives us. His blood saves us. Amen.