

There is a Fountain Filled With Blood

Zechariah 13:1

“On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”

There is a Fountain Filled With Blood was written by William Cowper. He was the son of an English pastor. His life was hard. He was born weak and feeble. His mother died when he was six years old. He had a hard time in school at the hands of a bully. He felt he was a failure at anything he tried. These things combined to make him not only despondent but emotionally and mentally unstable. His relatives were forced to commit him to the care of a mental hospital. He was in and out as his mental condition changed. After attempting suicide he became even more depressed, feeling that there could be no hope for him because he thought he had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, the unforgivable sin. His life had degenerated into a hopeless mess.

How did the Good Shepherd save his sheep? As so often, by drawing him to the Scriptures. One day he found a Bible in the garden and upon opening it read the story of the raising of Lazarus. Cowper meditated on the love of Christ for these people. He also thought about the power Jesus demonstrated when he raised a man who had been dead for four days. Jesus' love and his power brought soothing comfort to William Cowper's heart. As he read Romans 3:25 “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished,” the Holy Spirit gave him the conviction that in spite of what he had been or was, in Christ and his blood, he had full pardon and acceptance by his God. *There is a Fountain Filled With Blood* along with 65 other hymns is a direct fruit of this experience.

The Bible text on which Cowper based this hymn is Zechariah 13:1 “On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.” By the revelation of God, Zechariah was thinking of the first Good Friday. That was the day when the fountain was opened for our sin and impurity. Opening the fountain for sin and impurity took a tremendous amount of love and sacrifice on our Savior's part. They spit on him, kicked him, crowned him with thorns, and crucified him. Before it was all over there was blood on his head from the crown, blood on his back from the scourging, blood on his hands and feet from the nails, and blood from his side from the piercing. That's why our hymn writer writes: “There is a Fountain Filled With Blood.”

This is not an ordinary fountain. It's purpose is to wash away “sin and impurity.” What an extraordinary and unusual fountain! It was opened for all who hear God's Word. Christ said it's for, “whoever believes in him.” John 3:16. When Jesus opened that fountain, he opened it for all people, for William Cowper, for you, for me.

The Content of the Hymn

There is a fountain filled with blood – Immanuel was slain.

And sinners who are washed therein lose every guilty stain, lose every guilty stain.

Christ was called Immanuel, God with us. This fountain has extraordinary power because

Christ was an extraordinary person. Christ's humanity made it possible for him to suffer and die; his deity gave his suffering and death the power to save us from all sin and uncleanness. That's why the poet can add: And sinners who are washed therein lose every guilty stain.

"Sinners plunged beneath that fountain lose ALL their guilty stains." That's what saved William Cowper, gave him peace, and restored him to sanity. A partial cleansing would never have helped him and it doesn't help anyone else. There is no comfort in the false teaching that we are partly saved by what Christ did and partly by our own works. True comfort lies in our knowing that "sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."

In the second verse the hymnist gives an example of Christ's saving power.
The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day.
And there have I as vile as he Washed all my sins away, Washed all my sins away.

"The dying thief" is one of the two criminals who were crucified with our Lord. This man was a genuine bad guy. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst offenders. We would call him a hardened criminal. His life was filled with such wickedness that even though he was crucified he had to admit, "I am getting what I deserve."

But something happened to the malefactor on the cross: The Good Shepherd found one of his wandering sheep. Maybe it was Jesus' humble submission to those who crucified him. Maybe it was Jesus' love for his mother. Maybe it was Jesus' words from the cross. Maybe it was early childhood training about the Messiah in connection with the charge over Jesus' head, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Somehow the Holy Spirit changed this man's heart even while he was suspended on his cross next to Jesus. The thief confesses his new trust in Jesus with the simple request, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Without hesitation or conditions Jesus responded simply, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." In spite of the thief's crimes, sins, and shame, Christ could and did save him -- just plain gave him paradise. No wonder the dying thief rejoiced to see that day!

Cowper becomes very personal. He remembers his former sins, doubts, and fears and admits that he is just as vile as the thief, yet, by God's grace in Christ just as clean. Blessed are all of you who feel like Cowper -- sinful, vile, and dirty but completely forgiven in Christ.

Stanza three emphasizes the truth that Christ's precious blood will never lose its saving power.

Dear dying Lamb, your precious blood Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God Be saved to sin no more, Be saved to sin no more.

The precious blood of Christ has saving power until Judgment Day no matter how many people it cleanses. Look at what Jesus' blood is doing today! Wherever the love of Christ is preached some are converted. No, not all, but always some. That fountain opened on Calvary has power to fully save any and all who come to Christ. It is estimated that every day almost 20,000 people are converted from unbelief to trusting in Jesus as their Savior. Christ's blood still has the power to save. That's why the Poet adds stanza four.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream Your flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme And shall be till I die, And shall be till I die.

Overwhelmed by what Christ's blood has done for him and remembering its unchanging power William Cowper declares, "His redeeming love will be my theme until I die."

This is the theme, not just of pastors and teachers, but of everyone who has experienced the power of Christ's blood. How can anyone who has been cleansed and renewed keep from telling others about it? We want to tell our children, our relatives, our neighbors, everybody. Of course, there is joy in building houses, highways, working in a factory or hospital, but our greatest joy lies in building churches, sending out missionaries, and personally sharing Christ and his salvation with others. "Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die," if it isn't yours, then you still need conversion. If there is anyone present who isn't supporting the preaching of the gospel, then I urgently ask you to remember your own sinfulness and the power of Christ's blood. You need deliverance for you. You need to be saved from your sins, from hell, and from the devil. You and your sins are real -- and so is Christ. Let him be what he came to be, your Savior. Then you will be able to sing without hypocrisy and with heartfelt sincerity, "Redeeming love is now my theme and shall be till I die."

Stanza five reminds us that we who sing of Christ's love here will also sing of it in eternity.

When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song I'll sing your power to save,
I'll sing your power to save.

Revelation 7:9 and following records the song of the redeemed in heaven. St. John describes his vision as follows:

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell face down on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Christians never quit singing of the Lamb and his precious blood. As soon as our body and tongue lie buried in the grave we are already in heaven singing the same song but without any lisping or stammering. With a perfect tongue, perfect voice, perfect pitch we will naturally sing a sweeter and nobler song. Amen.