

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 20, 2019

Blood Covenant

Dr. Dick Foth

Here we are what a grand weekend it is. If you think it's a grand weekend, could you say 'yeah', something like that? There we go. Great. This is the fourth in a series of messages on the theme 'Detox'. I love that video, it's a great video. And Pastor Mark started us off with effective boundary markers. You know if you're too close, it gets legal, if you get too far away, it's all relative. Effective insights came next with Pastor Joel talking about identifying stuff that's toxic in our life and working to rid ourselves of the things that corrode us or erode our spirits. Last week, Pastor Heather talked about effective practices, about how do you..., what do you replace it with or that sort of thing, you rejoice, you pray, you focused, and so I'm the fourth in the series of four. Now on a baseball team the fourth hitter is called what? (audience replied "clean-up") I love the idea that we're doing a series on 'Detox' and I get to bat cleanup. I've been waiting for several weeks to say that. I just think that's tremendous. It sort of breaks down because what you have in the lineup is you have four good hitters and you want the first three to get on base and then the last person comes up and does a grand slam. The problem is I get up here and there's nobody on base because we've already had three home runs and so now here I am just swinging away, so.

When you look at the word toxic, none of it sounds good. I mean these are some synonyms for toxic, poisonous, venomous, virulent, noxious, dangerous, destructive, malignant, injurious, and my personal favorite pernicious and none of it sounds good, but what I'd like to do this weekend is to give you a sort of an umbrella metaphor for 'Detox' and how we think about it. You find it all the way through the scripture from Genesis to Revelation, and the purpose of 'Detox' is to give us life that is rich and full in body, soul, and spirit. We want something that is life giving, not life taking. There's one thing that each of us needs 100 percent for life to exist and that's blood. You say, 'Oh, gross, you can't talk about blood'. Well, it's only gross if it's outside, if it's inside, it's not gross, you know, generally. Some of you in college, our son, when he went to college, he'd go and he'd give a pint, you know, and they'd give him money and an orange juice and a cracker, I don't know exactly. I can't give blood because I had malaria when I was a little kid in India so; I'm out of the pool so to speak. But you know, you have a five year old looking at a scraped knee. I love this little quote and he looks at a scraped knee and he says, so what does, what does blood do all day? The difference between a mom and a doctor is a mom says, how do we get this out? You know, you've got to stay in it, and the doc is saying, how do we get this in? Unless the mom is a doc, then she gets both lines.

I want to read from two books today, or I want to deal with two books. One is the one that we always deal with and that's the scriptures, but the other is a book written by a doctor and a writer and author back in the early 1980's. The doctor is a surgeon raised in India. His name is Dr Paul Brand. He was trained in the UK, son of missionary parents, ended up leading the US leprosarium in Carville, Louisiana ended up as an orthopedic surgeon working with lepers, if you will. It's now closed, they're done. But how he sees the body is profound. So Phil Yancey, an author, came along and they wrote this book called In His Image. Every once in a while groups

of younger guys come and we hang out and almost always they will ask me this question somewhere along the line, so tell us like your very favorite book besides scripture, or give us the top three. This book is in my top three simply because this doctor and Phil Yancy took the idea of body, physical body and compared it to the body of Christ. Everything from muscle to bone to blood to cellular structure, all of that, and it's fascinating. So the scripture that I want to start with and I'm going to give you a series of scriptures through this message. The scripture I wanted to speak to you about is what my doctor in Fort Collins, Colorado calls the biochemists psalm. Psalm 139, this is how it starts out.

<sup>1</sup>*"You have searched me, O LORD, and you know me."*

When I was a kid, I used to see that as a threat because I'm sitting in church and I'm 14 years old and I'm checking out the girl across the... and the preacher says, God knows what you're thinking. I'm going, whoa, and it's too late, but I'm still here, so there you go.

<sup>1</sup>*"You have searched me, LORD, and you know me."*

And then further down it says

<sup>13</sup>*"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."*

Further on it says, <sup>14</sup>*"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."*

As we sang these songs this weekend about looking at the macro things, the universe and the stars and all of that. There's a universe inside of us that easily matches what's out there, if you will. So the scripture is fascinating when it comes to this subject. There's a verse in Leviticus that I want to read to you, but before I get there, last year or the year before, a young guy called me, he's in his twenties and he's a good friend of our son's and he called me up and he said, we decided to read through the scriptures, the whole of the Bible front to back, might as well go for it. And he said, I've just finished, I've just finished Genesis and Exodus. He said, that's better than an R rated movie, that's unbelievable, Genesis and Exodus. He said, but what's with Leviticus? What is that about? It's about hygienic laws, what you eat and all this kind of stuff. Here's a verse from Leviticus. Leviticus 17:11 says this about blood...

<sup>11</sup>*"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."* Atonement for one's life.

So, Paul Brand was a kid growing up in India. His father was a missionary and they had a modicum of medical training to help out in the outback, if you will, out in the rural areas. And he said, as a kid growing up, whenever somebody came to get something fixed and he saw blood, it just revolted him. He couldn't stand it. He never wanted to do what his dad did. He wanted to be a missionary, but he said, I'll go back and I'll be a carpenter, or a mason or an engineer, or I'll build stuff. I'll build hospitals, I'll do whatever, but I don't want anything to do with that medical stuff. He said, I had kept my promise of learning the building trade, having apprenticed as a

carpenter, a mason, a painter, and a brick layer, I loved it. Evening classes in civil engineering had also exposed me to the theories behind construction. The mission advised enrolling in the same Livingston College course in hygiene and tropical medicine that my father had taken. I was assigned to a local hospital, so he's back in England; he's doing his training as a missionary to do dressings in the wards and to learn basic principles of diagnosis and treatment.

"It was during one evening of my stint at Connaught that my whole view of medicine and of blood permanently shifted. That night hospital orderlies wield a beautiful young accident victim into my ward. Loss of blood had given skin and unearthly paleness, her brownish hair seemed jet-black in contrast. Oxygen starvation because the blood does that, it carries the oxygen, had shut down her brain into a state of unconscious. The hospital staff lurched into the controlled-panic response to a trauma patient. A nurse dashed down a corridor for a bottle of blood while a doctor fumbled with the transfusion apparatus. Another doctor, glancing at my white coat thrust, a blood pressure cuff at me. Fortunately, had already learned to read pulse and blood pressure. I could not detect the faintest flicker of a pulse on the woman's cold, damp wrist.

In the glare of hospital light she looked like a waxwork Madonna or an alabaster saint from a cathedral. Even her lips were pallid. Only a few freckled stood out against the pallor. She did not seem to be breathing. I felt sure she was dead.

The nurse arrived with a bottle of blood buckled into a metal stand as the doctor punctured the woman's vein with a large needle. They fastened the bottle, high and used an extra-long tube so that the increase in pressure would push the blood into her body faster. The staff told me to keep watch over the emptying bottle while they scurried off for more blood.

Nothing in my memory can compare to the excitement of what happened next. Certainly the details of that scene come to me even now with a start. As the others all left, I nervously held the woman's wrist. Suddenly I could feel the faintest press of a pulse. Or was it my own finger's pulse? I searched again - it was there, a tremor, barely perceptible, but regular. The next bottle of blood arrived and was quickly connected. A spot of pink appeared like a drop of watercolor on her cheek. It began to spread it to a beautiful flush. Her lips darkened pink, then red, and her body quivered with a kind of sighing breath.

Then her eyelids fluttered lightly and parted. She squinted at first and her pupils constricted, reacting to the bright lights of the room. At last, she looked directly at me. To my enormous surprise, she spoke asking for water.

That young woman entered my life for only an hour or so, but the experience left me utterly changed. I had seen a miracle: a corpse resurrected, the creation of Eve when breath entered into and animated her body. If medicine, if blood could do this..."

And then he says, "the memory of shed blood had kept me out of medicine; the power of shared blood brought me to it."

What I'd like to do, and I know that Pastor Mark and Pastor Heather and Joel, they talk about science stuff a lot and they described stuff and they actually know what it means. And so, but I'm

going share some things that I'm not sure I fully understand it's true, I just don't know that I understand all that I'm going to be saying, but so, I give that as a medical disclaimer here. So, if you're in the medical world, if you're a nurse or a PA or a doctor or a surgeon, if you're an EMT or a police officer or a fire guy or whatever, if you're a medevac person, trauma, so just, you can correct me after, but I'm just going for it right now. So, this is the Foth dumbbed down version of how I believe blood works. The body is comprised of somewhere between 40 trillion cells and 100 trillion cells, it depends on what you count and how you count it and who's counting. This blood soup that we have going through our veins. You have red blood cells which carry the oxygen, they're little buckets. My doctor says this to me every time I go to see him, I see him every three months and he, they send our blood off once a year to Cleveland Heart Clinic and it comes back and it's got all these things I don't understand a 10th of what he tells me. I just say, good, as long as there's green and not a lot of red, we're good, right?

But the red blood cells carry oxygen. The white blood cells, those are the defensive forces. You get a cut, they scurry over, there is all kinds of them, they patch, they plugged. And then you have these little platelet things that are... You can't see them with a human eye, they're not even a cell, they don't have a nucleus. Each one of those, and there are gazillions, each one of those carries 300 proteins. You can't live without proteins, and we, my doctor says, there are 300 proteins in one of those little tiny platelets and we know what 10 of them do.

So, here you sit. I can tell you something about yourself. You say you don't even know me. I know this about you that are interstate highway system in the United States has 48,000 miles of interstate highway. Your body, depending on your size, has somewhere between 60 and 80,000 miles of highway called blood vessels. And when it starts out, it gets that surge from the heart that (beat, beat) you know, boom, it's happening right now in you, okay, are you with me here? It's happening right now. Seventy beats a minute, you know. Every time it does that, this blood courses out the super highway goes down to two lane roads, go down to bike paths, go down to foot paths, and then you get one little red corpuscle way at the end that squeezes its way through this capillary that's the width one 10th the size of a human hair. 2 million red blood cells die and are replaced every second. So here, I'm going to stop for just a minute. Okay, we're gonna stop for 20 seconds. Here we go. Starting now, I'm Mr. Rogers.

I'll keep the time. 20 seconds.

20 seconds when your heart pumped, that rich life giving blood left your heart and 20 seconds later, that red corpuscle hit your big toe and it makes 500,000 round trips before it's tired out, get scrubbed, dismantled, sent back to the bone marrow, comes back in and that's happening every second, every minute as you sit here. And what's happening there is that within that red corpuscle there's a thing called hemoglobin.

This is the last fact, okay. So, the thing called a hemoglobin molecule and it has 10,000 atoms in it. My doctor tells me this and I'm saying, really? Yeah. 10,000 atoms in one little thing and four of those are iron and oxygen connects to those four out of 10,000 fills up that red blood cell bucket that's life and nourishment and keeps us alive and shoots it out. You go to the lungs; get oxygen and boom, off you go. Every second, every minute that you're sitting here listening to me, your body, all those trillions of cells are doing this. The bucket comes by, every cell has its

own little engine reaches out and it grabs the good stuff. This is Foth, okay, and it spits out the bad stuff, and so all the toxins go out to be excreted or breathed out and all the good stuff goes in every second, every minute of my life. Their job is to nourish and cleanse our bodies. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. You say, well, thanks a million for the biology lesson, that's cool. So what? If we lose blood we die. If we gained blood we live. Blood and life are synonyms. Paul Brand speaks to having a reverence for blood.

Thursday night, Ruth and I had dinner with some friends. He's a retired plastic surgeon, taught plastic surgery at Penn State for seven years, he's from South Africa. His specialty is cleft palates in babies. He puts faces back together when they're shattered in auto accidents. I asked him one time, what do you do? He said, I'm an artist. But he told us about being in a little country called Isuthu (sp) in South Africa area, one of the poorest countries in the world equivalent to Haiti. He said, we were in this little clinic. They didn't have anything. I was the surgeon, I was the anesthetist, I was the nurse. There wasn't anybody to help and these young women would come down out of the hills. They'd become pregnant, they were malnourished, so the pelvic structure was not large enough to accommodate the birth of a baby and many times they would hemorrhage out before they got to the hospital. And they'd wheel them in almost gone like the young woman we were talking about here, and he said more than once because there was no blood bank, more than once, I would tourniquet my arm, stick a needle in my arm, draw my own blood, give her a pint of blood and start working and save her life.

Blood is life and your body is creating this as I speak, replacing bad with good, replacing death with life. That said, how does that affect our spiritual lives? This book shows a river of life from Genesis to Revelation, running all the way through. The Old Testament saints, the Old Testament people thousands of years ago were inured to blood. They saw sacrifices; they saw capital punishment all the time. They were told and you can read them in Leviticus, they were told not to eat meat that had blood in it. You had to butcher it to be kosher. You had to butcher it and drain the blood in a certain way, why? Because blood is life. Blood was the atonement for sin. In the old sacrificial system, it was washing and cleansing, so you had a priest who was ritually purified, who did all of this. You had the Day of Atonement. It was a very elaborate process. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on things, poured ritually. So when you read the story of Moses and he's trying to get these slaves out of Egypt, there's this command given, take the blood of a lamb and put it over the door post and the death angel pass over, you won't be harmed.

Thirteen hundred years later in John, the first chapter, John the Baptist, six months older than Jesus, a 30 year old is baptizing people down at the Jordan for repentance. And he sees Jesus coming and he connects him with the blood on the doorpost. He said, look, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Decades later, Paul the apostle writes this in Ephesians 1:7

*"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of His grace."*

This thing that takes away the toxins in my life, this thing that takes away the toxicity of my spirit, the sacrifice of Jesus is central to what this book says. So you have Jesus. He's doing all these things. He's in his three years of public ministries and he's, you know, healing the sick and he's raising the dead. He's doing all these things. He feeds 5,000 people in John the sixth chapter and people follow him and they have this discussion about what brings life and he says you need to have spiritual bread; I'm the bread of life. And then he says this, you get to John the sixth chapter, 53rd verse.

<sup>53</sup> "Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me."

And I read that and I say what? Are you kidding me? Blood for atonement is supposed to be sprinkled or poured. And he says, drink. I mean clearly he's crossed the line. Clearly he's gone a bridge too far. Clearly this can't.... I mean, imagine you're a person, a practicing Jewish person and for centuries you have understood it this way and he comes along and says this thing that is in their minds, absolutely off the charts. You pour it or your sprinkler, but you don't drink it.

When I was in grad school in Wheaton back in 1964, one of my colleagues as a young man at age 19 actually had been dropped off by missionary aviation fellowship in New Guinea to go and work with a tribe of cannibals. And the subject of his thesis, his master's thesis was how would cannibals understand these verses. His conclusion was they would get it because cannibalism is part of the early church that was part of the charge. You know, these guys are drinking the blood already and there's all kinds of theological constructs about does the wine turn into blood? All that sort of thing.

There was a poet back in the 1700's by the name of William Cowper, they say it Cooper, I believe. He's the one who said variety is the spice of life that gives it all its flavor. He's the one who said God moves in mysterious way, his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. He had a friend by the name of John Newton and for 13 years when John Newton passed it into the little English town of Olney, they became friends. Cowper said a sincere or more affectionate friend no man ever had. John Newton was the one who wrote Amazing Grace. In 1769, Newton had the idea that they should collaborate on writing songs and so they wrote a bunch of songs. Newton wrote Amazing Grace and Wondrous Things of Thee Are Spoken. Cowper wrote God Moves In A Mysterious Way. And he wrote this song initially called Praise For The Fountain Opened.

There is a fountain filled with blood,  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains:  
The dying thief rejoiced to see  
The fountain in His day;

And there may I, though vile as he,  
Wash all my sins away:  
Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its pow'r,  
Till all the ransomed church of God  
Be saved, to sin no more:  
E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die:  
When this poor, lisping, stamm'ring tongue  
Lies silent in the grave,  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing Thy pow'r to save:  
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,  
I'll sing Thy pow'r to save.

I grew up singing that song almost every week and I never thought anything about. I didn't think like it was a gross or anything. It was just a song we sang and that's what it was and the idea of it, the idea of having all the toxins, we didn't call them that then, all the crud corruption washed away because I couldn't do it, was a tremendous thought. It's still a tremendous thought. It's more than that. It's a tremendous truth.

And so you see Jesus. What a picture of life given through Jesus' sacrifice. He's heading to the cross. He sitting at the passover meal, he's the image of the lamb and atonement in play. He captures the gravity and power because this is eternity about to intersect time. This is what he does. At the last supper, he took the bread, Luke 22:19 and 20.

*<sup>19</sup> "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."<sup>20</sup> In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

The single thing we do to remember the life and death of Jesus is we quote, take communion. We received the Lord's Table which says, remember his sacrifice for you. You cannot clean the toxins out of your life for eternity. Only he can, that's the message. That's the good news. It all centers there, this is a covenant of cleansing and he changed the rules. I say I'd like to help; I'd like to be a part. What can I do to help clean me up?

I was talking to some friends today, and I said, you know, my mom used to say, when it's time for dinner, Dick, come to dinner, go get cleaned up and come to dinner, wash your hands and so forth, and Jesus comes along and changes that just a bit. He says, Dick, come together, I'll clean you up as you come. This is the God who detoxifies us when we start toward him. This is the God who through his sacrifice changes the rules. And I say, I'd like to help. And he said, no, no, no. This is the deal. I'll do it all. You can accept it or you can reject it, but you can't alter the terms. I will do it all.

There's an old gospel song that says,

Jesus paid it all  
All to him I owe  
Sin has left this guilty stain, he washed it white as snow

This is how John the apostle says it, first, John 1:7

<sup>7</sup> "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from sin."

It's the ultimate 'Detox'. Here's that phrase again from Paul Brand, "the memory of shed blood had kept me out of medicine, the power of shared blood ultimately brought me to it." You get to the end of the biochemists Psalm, and this is what it says.

<sup>23</sup> "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

You say so, how do I oxygenate? How do I get that going in my life? Well, when we set those good boundaries, when we affect, identify things that need to be taken care of. When we in fact rejoice and pray all those things that we've heard already, that is part of the detox process. I've said this a lot of times here, it's not my line. Jesus didn't come to make bad people good. He came to make dead people live.

So you say, how does it, how does it work? How do I take this metaphor? How do I take it from the physical thing that sometimes grosses me out over here to a spiritual thing? He says in John five, when you believe, when you trust me, that's when it starts. That's how it works.

I have watched over the last 50 or 60 years, people's lives be totally transformed when they said, God help me. Jesus, I believe, help my unbelief. I mean, you know, there's no like set pattern. There's no template except my heart is turned toward him and I say, I'm going to trust. I'm going to trust you; nothing else I've trusted has ever worked. I'm going to trust you even if I can't see you and I'd like you to do that detox thing in me. I'd like you to do it by giving me life and pushing out the junk. That's what I'd like to have happen.

I had this young woman come to me some years ago with her boyfriend. They were going to get married and both of them had had raggedy lives. They'd had lots of partners, lots of people, and they said, we don't want our marriage to be tainted by that. And I asked her the question, what do you want? And she said I'd like to be a seven year old girl again between clean white sheets. That's what I'd like. And over the next few weeks I watched that happen, there was a moment in time when that happened for her. She came in and said, this is what happened and she told me, the story. I've seen people who just, you thought there's no way, there's no way that person could ever change. And I've seen this happen, this detox process when they say, I believe that you can, I believe that you will do this for me.

I have to tell you that I've been a little nervous about this message. I've been nervous because how do I get the thought from the solid stuff like that blood over here with this metaphor of the cleansing blood of Jesus. And I came up with this answer. I don't know. What I do know is that both those things I've told you are true. Both those things that what's going on in us is a detox life giving process. And what goes on through Jesus coming into our lives is that same process just done at the deepest part of my spirit and it's the eternal peace that keeps going. You say, huh? How might I do that even this weekend if I've never done that? I'm not one of those believers, I'm sitting with people who call themselves believers, I don't know, I'm a doubter, I'm a skeptic or I don't know. Somebody said they'd take me to dinner after, so I just came, you know, whatever. How do I get...? What if you did something like this? What if you just breathed out and in the breathing out you said, Lord, as much as I know of me, I give to as much as I know of you, I'll trust you with that. And breathe in his spirit and let him oxygenate and give you the start of life in the detox process.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for the cleansing stream that we don't fully understand, but we absolutely love. We absolutely appreciate that in all of the things going on in my life, you care about every part of my life, every part. And if there is one sitting here this weekend who just says, I'm ready, let them breathe out that prayer and breathe in your life and let it be of the spirit. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.