



The Austin Stone
COMMUNITY CHURCH

NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD

BY SCOTT CORBIN

*"Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you."
- Psalm 73:25*

Written by Baptist minister Robert Lowry in 1876, "Nothing But the Blood" is a great American hymn. For those who have grown up in church, no matter the tradition, there is likely to be at least a certain degree of familiarity. Some hymns are as American as apple pie, boycotts, or denominational infighting. "Nothing But the Blood" is an American classic.

It is easy, though, to become callous to what it is we're singing. How many churches sing theologically rich psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs out of their hymnals yet have departed from those very doctrines generations before? How many church's confessions and statements of faith have gone through innumerable changes influenced by the culture while the hymnal sits in the pew collecting dust? It's easy to cast theological fidelity to the winds while white-knuckling our old time religion.

But in order for us to appreciate this hymn, we have to appreciate the theology behind it. This is a fairly simple task, for a look at the verses will quickly reveal the theological center of "Nothing But the Blood." What can wash away my sin? Make me whole? What is my righteousness? My hope and peace? Answer: Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

It is a curious paradox of the Christian gospel that the redness of Christ's blood is what makes the Christian white as snow. Washed in the blood of the Lamb, our everlasting righteousness is established. Christ's suffering, our reward.

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 73:25 "Whom have I in heaven but you?" For the Christian, Christ is our hope and peace. If there were no mediator in heaven, we would still be dead in our sins. If there were no substitute to suffer our punishment on our behalf, we would be doomed. If there were none to drink every last drop of the wrath of God in our stead, we would be condemned.

Whom do we have in heaven but Christ? There is none.

But we *do* have Christ! For the Christian, Jesus is our treasure. There is nothing on earth that the Christian desires besides Christ because if they only had Christ, they would still have all things. Jesus is the pearl of great price. Anything else compared to Jesus is dross. The basis for this gift? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.