

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT



‘THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.’—REVELATION 12:11.

‘BEHOLD THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT.’—EXODUS 24:8.

HORATIUS BONAR



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by Horatius Bonar

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."--Revelation 12:11.

"Behold, the blood of the covenant."--Exodus 24:8.

All through Scripture we find traces of the blood. 'You shall bruise His heel' was the first reference to it. The bruised heel of the woman's seed was to be the foundation stone of our deliverance. It was to be deliverance by blood. The bruised heel was to tread upon the serpent's head. In connection with this announcement as to the bruised heel, sacrifice was ordained; and thus the truth began to be developed; victory for the sinner through the blood of One who was to be slain.

'The blood is the life' (Deuteronomy 12:23). Not that blood and life are actually the same thing--the one is material, the other immaterial. But the blood is the 'life made visible'--the liquid link between body and soul, which, once broken, brings death. The blood poured out is the life drained away from the body--the departure of

the soul from its material dwelling. Thus the blood and the life are identified. God identifies them; law identifies them. Blood 'shed' is the symbol or visible exhibition of 'death'.

Death was the penalty of man's guilt. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins--it shall die. If, then, another life is to be taken for our life, and another death is to be substituted for ours, the true expression of this is the drawing the blood from the victim, and putting that blood on us. This is the symbolic declaration of the great substitution, the great transference--one life for another, one death for another. Death, with all its consequences, lies on the transgressor until another death comes (in the symbolic form of blood), and washes it away. When the sinner receives God's testimony to 'the blood of the Lamb', then the transference is at once completed--death passes away.

Let us see the different aspects in which the blood is presented to us in Scripture; the manifold blessings with which it is connected; the various points at which we come into contact with it.

I. The blood of the Lamb contains the good news. (Hebrews 12:24) It 'speaks better things than that of Abel.' It speaks of grace, not of wrath; of mercy, not of vengeance; of peace returning, not of peace departing. As seen on the altar, it tells the good news of life given for life; as seen upon the mercy seat, it says, 'Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.' Glad tidings of great joy to the sinfullest are contained in the blood--the precious blood of Christ. It

offers to the sinner a reversal of the sentence of death, by presenting him with the death of another in his stead.

II. The blood of the Lamb is the purchase money for the Church. (Acts 20:28) As God's eternal purpose deals both with the Church as a whole, and with each chosen soul, so does the blood. It is the price or ransom of the whole Church; it is the price and ransom of each should that is saved. Of the church it is true--'she is bought with a price;' of each saint it is true--he is bought with a price. The 'blood of the covenant' is the payment demanded by the Father, and paid by the Son. Not without blood can the purpose of the Father be carried out. It is the legal payment of the price or penalty, because it was the death which the Church should have died--but which her Surety took upon Him.

III. The blood of the Lamb is the atonement. (Exodus 30:10) 'Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of the altar with the blood of the sin-offering' (Leviticus 17:11). 'The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.' The Old Testament word "atonement" means 'to cover;' and the blood is that which 'covers' sin, so that it becomes hidden and indiscernible by God Himself--as if the only thing through which the eye of God could not penetrate was the altar blood. To him whose sin is thus 'covered' by the blood, God is propitious. The blood propitiates; and the blood, received by the sinner (in the belief of God's testimony to it), propitiates God toward

the sinner himself personally. Only the blood can cover! Not mountains, nor seas, nor the thick forests of earth; only blood--the blood of the one Sacrifice. In this is atonement; and, as the result of atonement, reconciliation with God. Looking at the paschal blood, God says, 'Pass over, slay not;' looking at the sacrificial blood, God says, 'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more!'

IV. The blood of the Lamb is the redemption. (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18,19; Revelation 5:9) Redemption is not the same as the atonement or the purchase money, already noticed. It is the carrying out of that for which the price was paid and the atonement made. The paying down the money is one thing; the redeeming the person so paid for, so ransomed, is something more. It is nearly synonymous with salvation, only it expresses the way by which the salvation has been obtained--by ransom or purchase. Hence the expression, 'the redemption of the purchased possession' (Ephesians 1:14). Redemption by blood is our gospel; redemption presented fully by the redeeming One to the 'lawful captive,' to the imprisoned and exiled sinner. He who believes enters into possession of all that it contains.

V. The blood of the Lamb is the bringing near. (Ephesians 2:13) The far off are made near by the blood. It is the blood which removes the distance; that brings God near to us, and us near to God. It annihilates all distance, and all variance. The blood brings about the meeting between us and God. Incarnation is not the bringing near, nor the thing which brings us near; it is merely the first step in a

process, which, had it not ended in the blood shedding, would have been all in vain. It is the blood that emboldens us to draw near to God, and justifies God in drawing near to us. 'Let us draw near' is the voice of the blood, speaking both from the altar and the mercy seat. And how? 'With a true heart and in the full assurance of faith.' And the blood provides for both of these.

VI. The blood of the Lamb contains the cleansing. (1 John 1:7) This is spoken of also as 'purging' (Hebrews 9:14, 22), and as 'washing' (Revelation 1:5); and it is to this that Zechariah refers, when he speaks of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness (ch. 13:1); and David, when he prays, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow' (Psalm 51:7). It is specially to the guilt that these passages refer--the judicial or legal defilement or condemnation, as the consequence of sin committed; so that, when that defilement or condemnation was removed by the application of the blood of the substitute, the man became clean in the sight of God and of His law. He was purged in conscience and in heart; in body, soul, and spirit. After this, the inward purification began, and was carried on in connection with the blood, through the power of the Spirit. We preach the purging and cleansing blood. It has lost none of its efficacy. The Lamb slain is the same as ever; and the High Priest is the same as ever; and the blood is the same as ever--as able to purge and purify.

VII. The blood of the Lamb contains the peace. (Colossians 1:20) 'Peace through the blood of His cross;' for 'He is our peace'

(Ephesians 2:14); and because of the blood, God 'is pacified towards us for all that we have done' (Ezekiel 16:63). It is the blood that has made the peace, for it removes that which produced the controversy and contention. The blood pacifies. It removes that which drew on us the wrath of God, quenching that wrath; it removes that which made us dread God and flee from Him, like Adam. Peace through the blood is our message! To the guiltiest rebel upon earth it comes!

VIII. The blood of the Lamb contains the pardon. (Hebrews 9:22) 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.' By the shedding of blood then, there is remission of sins. The many blood sheddings have ceased (Hebrews 10:18); and the one blood shedding, which in its value, and efficacy, and suitableness is everlasting and infinite, remains. Taking it as the payment of the penalty, substituted by God for our non-payment of it, we are forgiven. He who receives the divine testimony to the blood is in so doing forgiven. That blood, by covering his sins, brings pardon--pardon to anyone who is willing to take pardon in this way from God.

IX. The blood of the Lamb contains justification. (Romans 5:9) 'Justified by His blood.' We get justification by His grace and by His righteousness. Here it is said to be by His blood. Justification seems here opposed to 'condemnation'--the sweeping away of everything that brought us under condemnation. This the blood accomplishes; meeting every accusation, answering every plea, setting aside everything that is laid to our charge. Looking to the blood, we can

say, 'who is he who condemns?' The blood sets us right in conscience and in law with God. It justifies the ungodly.

X. The blood of the Lamb contains that which makes white. (Revelation 8:14) 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Not only the man, but his garments are made white. This is more than cleansing. It is the word used regarding Christ's transfiguration-garments (Matthew 17:2); the angel-robes (Matthew 28:3); the heavenly clothing (Revelation 4:4); the judgment throne (Revelation 20:2). Whiter than snow or wool, white as the garments of Christ--no, the 'head and hair' of Christ (Revelation 1:14). This is the result of the application of the blood to those who were 'blacker than the coal,' redder than crimson. What potency, what virtue, what excellency does this blood contain! How it beautifies and glorifies!

XI. The blood of the Lamb contains that which sanctifies. (Hebrews 13:12) 'That He might sanctify the people with His own blood.' This is consecrating them as His kings and priests, setting them apart for service, making them 'saints,' holy ones. The blood of the great Sin-offering (outside the gate) sanctifies. As soon as the blood touches us, by our believing, we are set apart--we become the royal priesthood, holy to the Lord.

XII. The blood of the Lamb contains the power to conquer. (Revelation 12:2) 'They overcame by (on account of) the blood of the Lamb.' No victory without the blood! No power to fight; no motive in

fighting; no hope of overcoming. The blood takes the strength from the enemy. The blood supplies us with all these. We look to it, and out of weakness we are made strong. We look to it, and we are cheered as well as nerved for conflict with the enemy.

XIII. The blood of the Lamb contains our right of entrance into the holiest. (Hebrews 10:19) He entered 'by His own blood' (Hebrews 9:12). He gives us this blood as our right of entrance is sprinkled and consecrated by His blood. Let us draw near! The blood removes all cause of dread, all possibility of rejection, more--gives the certainty of reception. Let us go in! We are sure of a welcome. It gives boldness as well as right of entrance. It says, 'Draw near boldly.'

XIV. The blood of the Lamb contains the seal of the covenant. (Luke 22:20) 'This cup is the new testament in my blood.' The blood seals the covenant--and the cup is the symbol of that seal. It is 'the everlasting covenant' (Hebrews 13:20); the 'covenant of peace' (Isaiah 54:10); 'the new covenant' (Jeremiah 31:31); the covenant which is absolute and unconditional; which not only gives to each sinner who believes a present standing before God of favor and love, but which secures his eternal future beyond the possibility of a second fall. The blood covenant makes us safe forever. O blood-sealed covenant, ordered in all things and sure, what a foundation are those for our faith to rest upon, and of our hope to rejoice in! Yes, and the ages to come are all contained within your ample compass.

XV. The blood of the Lamb contains the true drink for the soul. 'My blood is the true drink' (John 6:55). It quenches the thirst of the soul--the thirst of parching produced by an evil conscience and a sense of wrath, which dries up the frame like a potsherd (Psalm 22:15). It removes the wrath and the sense of wrath--by showing us that wrath transferred to the Substitute. It relieves the conscience when first we come into contact with it; and it keeps it relieved from day to day, as we drink it by faith. It is 'drink indeed.' It calms, it revives, it refreshes, it soothes; it is like cold water to the thirsty lips under a scorching sun. Nothing but the blood can allay this thirst; nothing else can be drink for the soul, for the intellect, the conscience, the heart.

XVI. The blood of the Lamb contains life. (John 6:53) 'Unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, you have no life in you.' The blood not only 'removes death' (judicial and spiritual), but it gives and 'preserves life' (judicial and spiritual). It quickens! Israel was forbidden to taste the literal blood, and would have been punished with death had they done so; we are commanded to drink the spiritual or symbolical blood, with the promise and assurance that it contains life for us. Without it we have no life. We are not only to be sprinkled with it outwardly, but we are to receive it inwardly--to drink it. As with the water, so with the blood. They are for inward as well as for outward application. We drink them and live; and are washed with them and made clean.

XVII. The blood of the Lamb contains protection. (Exodus 12:13; Hebrews 6:28) The blood of the paschal lamb was Israel's protection. No sword could reach the man on the door of whose dwelling God saw the sprinkled blood. So the blood of Christ our Passover protects. In believing God's testimony to the blood; it becomes sprinkled upon us; and from that moment we are safe. The blood is our security. God sees it, and bids the sword pass by.

XVIII. The blood of the Lamb contains separation from the world. (Hebrews 13:2) As the Sin-offering, Jesus suffered outside the gate; thereby not only fulfilling His sacrificial work, and completing the sacrificial symbol or type, but leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. 'Let us go forth' is the voice that comes to us from the blood. Come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing; for the blood of the sin offering is upon us, and Jesus is before us. Let us go forth not only from Babylon and Egypt, but from 'Jerusalem'--Jerusalem, which had become the type of the false Church--the mere religious professor--which, while naming His name, rejects Him and His cross, more--crucifies Him afresh! Let us keep ourselves unspotted not only from the ungodly world as such, but from a worldly Church--worldly professors, who, instead of bearing Christ's reproach, bring reproach upon Him!

XIX. The blood of the Lamb contains resurrection. (Hebrews 13:20) By the blood of the everlasting covenant, Christ was raised. Our sins had slain Him, shed His blood, and brought Him down to the grave! But that shed blood was the removal of the sins that had

weighed Him down. God saw in that blood the finished substitution. He accepted it, and gave evidence to that completed work of propitiation, by raising the Substitute. As the great Shepherd, He gave His life for the sheep; His life was accepted instead of theirs; His death made their dying no longer necessary--no, unjust. The blood was the payment of that which had brought death on Him and us; and therefore He was raised. With Him we rise--by the efficacy of the same blood. That blood, which is the symbol of death, is the seal of resurrection.

XX. The blood of the Lamb contains condemnation. (Matthew 27:4, 25; Acts 5:28; Hebrews 10:29) It thus contains the condemnation of Judas, of Jerusalem and Israel--of all rejecters of Christ. The same blood that spoke of pardon speaks of condemnation. Under the weight of 'rejected blood' the unbelieving sinner perishes. This is the condemnation which the church in these last days is preparing for itself--(1) slighting the blood; (2) rejecting it; (3) trampling on the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Under this aggravated guilt the world shall go down to wrath; for it is guilt of the deepest dye--the deliberate refusal of and contempt for all that God has provided for the sinner. If an Israelite had torn down the tabernacle, overthrown altar and laver, slain the priest, cast forth the blood and water, defiled the mercy-seat, he would be but a type of him who values at nothing the Son of God, and slights His blood. This is the millstone which the world is fastening to its own neck, which shall sink it in the abyss forever!

Yet still the value and the virtue of the blood of the Lamb remain the same. It has lost none of its efficacy. It can still cleanse, and redeem, and purify. It can still pacify the conscience and reconcile of God. Not even its most deliberate rejecters need despair, or fear that it may not avail for them. It cannot lose its power. Up to the very last it avails. Of its divine value the chief of sinners may avail himself without fear or distrust. In crediting the Holy Spirit's testimony to its undiminished and unchangeable sufficiency, the guiltiest upon earth will draw out all its fullness to himself; the whole value of the blood passes over to him who believes, as soon as he has believed. Not upon feeling, but upon believing, does the obtaining of its benefits depend. As soon as we receive the divine testimony, all that the blood has secured for sinners passes over to us as our righteous and everlasting possession. The preciousness of the blood is transferred to us; the preciousness of Him whose blood it is becomes ours, and we are accepted in the Beloved! 'Jehovah our righteousness' is our joy and our song!

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