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The Blood of the Eternal Covenant

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Heb. 2:14-15: 13:20-21: 1 John 1:7; Rev. 12:11.

These passages bear upon three aspects of the efficacy and effectiveness of the blood of the Lord Jesus. The first has to do with sin, the second with death, the third with him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

I hope that in a very simple way the meaning and value of the blood of the Lord Jesus should be set before you, that you may, apart from all the profundity that there is connected with the matter of the blood of Christ, see clearly that upon which your faith is to rest.

We are well aware of the tremendous place which blood occupies in the Scriptures. Very early therein we come upon it. Hardly have we entered into the history of this world before we come upon the shedding of blood in sacrifice, not merely as an incidental thing, but as carrying with it pre-eminent and abiding elements, which are taken up and referred to and used to account many centuries afterward. From that initial shedding of blood by Abel, the Word of God is full of that matter right on to the last book of the Bible, which also has much bearing upon it. The book of the Revelation brings the Lamb into view as newly slain, and the blood of the Lamb is presented as the ground of the final victory.

Thus the Word of God is full of references to the blood, and when we have worked our way through it all, brought this great mass under consideration, and have asked ourselves the question in the presence of this tremendous accumulation of Scriptural reference: What does it all mean? What is the main thing in view? With all the many-sidedness of application, with all that came and comes within the compass of that blood, what is the one thing which predominates and is the ultimate

thing with which the blood is connected? The answer is quite clearly this: it is the entire question of living fellowship with God. We might put that in another way, and say it is the whole matter of restored communion with God in life.

That is very simple as a statement, but it sums up the whole matter, for wherever you touch this matter of the blood of the sacrifice, shed and sprinkled, you find that you are touching the matter of approach to God in a way that will exempt you from judgement, death, destruction, or on the other hand, which will give you free, living, blessed access to, and communion, with God. Surely that is the main, the pre-eminent thing, the thing which matters more than any other thing in anyone's life. That is the thing which is transcendent in the history of man, that man should enjoy living communion with his God. The loss of that is the whole story of man having lost the thing for which he has a being.

Again, that is very simple, but we have only to ask our own hearts as to how far that is a matter of seriousness and we have the answer very quickly. What is it that we long for, crave for, yearn for, desire more than anything else? Many of us know, but whether we know it or not, the truth remains that it is a living fellowship with God. That is the realm of heart satisfaction, and only in that realm do we find satisfaction, and day by day our prayer is for the realisation of that in fuller measure. The Lord Himself has become our satisfaction. There is nothing in life, in the world, in the universe like real fellowship with the Lord. If that is true, then it is the testimony to the fact that the greatest thing that can come to man is communion with God. That brings a very great weight to bear upon the matter of the blood of the Lord Jesus if, as we believe, the Bible teaches through and through in this whole tremendous emphasis upon the blood, that this and this only, is the ground and way of such fellowship with God.

That brings us, then, to these three main aspects of the blood's effectiveness. What is it, in the first place, which has interrupted that fellowship with God, broken into it, destroyed it, and which, as long as it remains, makes that fellowship impossible? It is sin! Fellowship with God is clearly stated to be by the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleansing us from all sin. What is the consequence of sin? It is death! What is death? It is eternal separation from God and the full consciousness of it. What is it that lies behind sin, bringing sin and maintaining sin, giving force to sin and intelligence to sin and therefore, through sin, having the hold upon the power of death? It is the devil!

How does the blood of the Lord Jesus deal with sin, death and the devil? Deal with sin, and you have dealt with death and the devil, because death has its power in sin, and Satan has his power by death because of sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." How? To push the question further on into Revelation 12: How is Satan overcome? "They overcame him". How? "Because of the blood of the Lamb...". How did they overcome by the blood of the Lamb? Simply this way, that inasmuch as sin inevitably and certainly produces death, and that is the work of the devil, only death can nullify death, and when death is nullified, Satan's power is gone. The Lord Jesus is said to have poured out His soul unto death, shed His blood.

In the Old Testament we are presented continually with the fact that the blood is a very sacred thing, and that blood was never to be taken as drink, and if anyone should do that, they would be guilty of death, and would be destroyed. Why was that? Because there is one Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ the Righteous. Only one Mediator, only one in the whole history of this world whose blood can be appropriated to personal good, to life, to salvation. Not even a type could go that far. Even in the sacrifice without spot and without blemish of old, the blood could not be drunk. This was reserved unto one Lamb; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves." We are held to one Mediator because of who He was. Because of the

utter sinlessness of His nature, of His very Being, He could take the unique position of being the one Mediator. If there could have been traced in the nature of the Lord Jesus one minute spot of inherent sin; if under the eye, not of a trained priest but of an infinitely holy God who searches to the innermost depths and sees the most minute flaw, there could have been detected one (no matter how small) touch of iniquity in Him, He could not have taken that position, He would have been engulfed, He would have been swallowed up by the evil thing with which He was dealing. He would have come under personal judgement, and therefore death must have come upon Him as under personal judgement for sin, and He could not have survived. There has never been another, and there will never be another, who could stand in that position under God's eyes, those eyes of flaming fire, but as those eyes looked Him through and through, piercing to the very marrow, they detected not one dark spot of iniquity, of sin, in all His holy Being - One Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

That One then, can enter voluntarily into the realm of our estate, keeping personally clear of that estate; He can therefore take responsibility for that estate upon Himself. His death was the death of one whose death has never been repeated, has never seen the like in all the terrible history of death. It was a mighty death. Think of this One yielding to and entering into death, over whom death had absolutely no power because it had not its ground. See this One coming into the very realm of the devil's power and dominion, and the devil having to say: "I have no power over Him; I have no purchase in Him; I have nothing in Him that I can get hold of to destroy Him! He comes into my realm, and I am helpless because of what He is!" When He poured out His soul unto death it was no ordinary soul, and it was not the soul of the best man who ever lived. No! It was more than that, He was One apart from all others, unique in the whole realm of God's creation. That One came into a relationship with us, not as part of our sinful nature, but associating Himself with our lost estate. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that (what a mighty "that") through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15, KJV). How does He deliver? Because He can march through the devil's domain, and the devil cannot lay hold of Him; and He can carry out what He likes in virtue of His own infinite Being, and the devil has no power to bid Him stay.

That One has taken our sin upon Him and the end of sin, death, which is separation from God in full consciousness of it. And because He has dealt with our sin by the shedding, the pouring out of His own blood unto death, all that terrible eternity of death (note that He tasted death in the behalf of every man), because He has gone that way, and His blood has effected that sin cure, that sin remedy, that sin destruction, death is swallowed up in victory in Him, and Satan is overcome.

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb (but you must not stop there), and *because of the word of their testimony*". That is, not that they entered into some objective fight with the devil, with the dragon merely, but while it is an objective conflict, it was rather the position which they took up which gave them the fighting and overcoming power. It was the word of their testimony which said, and ever says: "Sin, so far as I am concerned, has been swallowed up by my Mediator; death is no more, because He has conquered death; therefore the dragon, however furious he may be, is in Him already defeated."

That is a faith position. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. The victory that overcomes is your faith. In what? That is what gives character to faith. It is not that we have something which we call "faith" as a kind of abstract thing, that we try to work up, something we call "faith". No, the thing which gives value to faith is its object, it is not that I am screwing myself up to believe something, it is that I stand immovable in One who has overcome. It is the object that gives

the value to faith. "And they overcame him because... they said: 'We shall never be beaten, we refuse to be beaten'"? No, never! Because there was One who by His blood had dealt with the sin question, as the ground of the death question, as the ground of the devil question. All three were dealt with when He bore our sin in His own Body on the tree.

Sin lies at the root, and the blood always begins its operations in the realm of sin. You never begin with the blood in the realm of Satan. You never begin with the blood in the realm of death. You always begin with the blood in the realm of sin. At least Satan does, if you do not! How is he going to defeat you? How is he going to break you? How is he going again to engulf you with the spirit of death? By bringing into your heart, if he can, some accusation of sin, and constitute in you an element of condemnation. So he is forever seeking to bring the saints back on to the old ground where the blood is forsaken, where they forget the infinite efficacy of that blood, what Christ has done for them, where they become occupied with some wrong, some sin, some fault, some flaw, something not according to God. They are obsessed with it, taken up with it, instead of putting it where it ought to be, carrying it right away immediately by faith to that once-for-all cleansing.

Do not take back what God has put away. He has put our sins and our iniquities behind His back. Do not go behind God's back and bring them out again. He has cast our sins into the depths of the sea. That is no place for you and me, and yet so many of the Lord's own children are, as it were, in the very depths, occupied with the thing which God has plunged out of His sight. Satan loves to get us taken up with that again, to bring accusations as the Accuser of the brethren. Stand on the blood. Shelter forever beneath the blood. Maintain your faith in Him whose blood has dealt with your sin.

You say: "Supposing we do sin? Are we never going to sin again? Supposing we do, are we not to take any notice of it, are we to ignore it, are we not to regard it seriously?" Yes, regard it just as seriously as the blood of the Lord Jesus regards it. But remember that if you take it away from the blood, then you come under its weight of seriousness and the Lord cannot come out there to find you. The Lord says, "You are on forbidden ground; you have gone where I cannot come: you are in the wilderness, and I have done with the wilderness! Come back on to this ground, and I will meet you here!" So He has caused it to be written: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father..." (1 John 2:1). It is to get back to the Advocate, the one Mediator between God and man, not to stay out there with the thing which has gone wrong. The blood goes on cleansing while we remain on the ground where the blood operates, that is, the ground of faith in the precious blood of Jesus.

God Himself exists for us upon the ground of the blood of His Son. He has put Himself there for us, and all that there is in Him is on the ground of the blood of His Son. That, of course, covers a great deal. Turn to Romans 15 and you will find that God is given three titles there. The first is the God of patience (15:5). The second is the God of hope (15:13). The third is the God of peace (15:33). That sums up the whole letter to the Romans. Each of those titles covers a section of that letter.

The God of Patience

Read the first section of the Roman letter, and you will find the whole world devoid of righteousness. Though righteousness is sought everywhere, it is not found, and the verdict concerning all is: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God". What are you going to do with that? Literally wipe it out? Surely that is the only thing to do with it. But what is the good of wiping it out? Where will that get you? De-populate the universe and have a void, an emptiness. Can God be satisfied with that? Will that please Him? Would He feel happy when He had done it? Or would it spell the defeat of God's purpose? What attitude will God take toward a world in which righteousness cannot be found?

What attitude has He taken? What is the answer of our own hearts? *The God of infinite, unspeakable patience!*

That word "patience" means "steadfast endurance". There is one other word which the New Testament uses, and that is: "longsuffering". "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise... but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish..." (2 Peter 3:9). We know the value of that. God does not annihilate anything. Hell is not annihilation, death is not annihilation, but an awful thing of conscious, utter separation from God and abandonment by God. And because God is not going to annihilate, but rather because of that awful result of sin which is worse than annihilation, God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. He is the God of patience.

The God of Hope

That leads on to something else. What is the dynamic of God's longsuffering? It is God's hope. What is God's hope? Is it that God is saying, "Well, I hope things will get better, I hope it will improve, that one day something will happen to change things..."? Oh, no! God's hope is rooted and grounded in something far more solid than that. God's hope is centred in His Son: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". God's hope is in the great work of His Son in the cross and in His resurrection, and God's hope has been justified in multitudes of cases, and it will yet be justified.

Look again at the letter to the Romans and you will see that there is a state there which requires hope. The world is sinful throughout, lying under judgement, and then God's Son comes in in Romans 6. He enters into that whole realm representatively, and even God's Son goes out into the realm of death for a moment. But God's hope comes in in Romans 6 on the other side, and emerges into full blossom in Romans 8. He has raised Jesus from the dead, and in that resurrection there is hope, a new creation. All God's original thought is possible in the resurrection of His Son, and our union with Christ in resurrection opens up the infinite possibilities of full fellowship with God. And what possibilities they are! There is no desolation there. There is nothing of despair, of uncertainty, of doubt, of fear. It is all hope in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is the Firstfruits. What are firstfruits? Bring your handful of first ripe corn, and what is the inner feeling that will throb in you as you hold the firstfruits? This is the earnest of the whole! Because this has come, the rest will come! Because He has raised Christ from the dead, He will raise us also with Him. That is the note of hope.

The God of Peace

From Romans 15 we leap to Hebrews 13: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant...". Why, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant"? Why, "that brought again from the dead"? Because of the nature of that blood, incorruptible, sinless, undefiled, which could therefore never be holden of death. He must come back from the dead, because of the sinlessness of His very life. That blood, because of its nature, is a covenant in life. It is a deathless covenant, because of its own holy nature. He reaches the cup to you and to me and says: "Drink ye... this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (1 Cor. 11:2). You are taking deliverance from sin! "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead...". Do you see what you are taking? You are taking deliverance from the dead, deliverance from him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. You are taking all that in the cup by faith.

"Having made peace through the blood of His cross..." (Col. 1:20). What is that? It is reconciliation. There is no more quarrel, no more conflict. God has no longer to say, "Stand back, I can have nothing to do with you; you and I are in a state of warfare; your condition and Mine are violently antagonistic; come near and you will be destroyed!" He has made peace through the blood of His cross, and He says: "Draw near, with full assurance of faith". It is a blessed thing to remember that the initiative was with the Lord. We might have craved for reconciliation, we might have fretted to be on good terms with God as multitudes of poor, unenlightened heathen today are doing everything that imagination can create to try and appease the wrath of their gods, to get on good terms with the higher spirits. Oh, that they knew! Do we know it? Do we rest in it enough? It is not for us to try and appease the wrath of God. We have to do nothing to settle the quarrel. God has taken the initiative.

He is the God of peace. He gave His Son. He provided the Sacrifice; He provided the Atonement; He provided the Blood: He has provided the Resurrection. The whole ground of fellowship with Himself has been provided by Himself. To us He says: "For all the good of this it is a matter of whether you will believe it, whether in faith you will accept it, and whether in faith you will maintain your position there once you have taken it". Do not be moved away from the hope of your calling. Do not be moved away from your steadfastness. Maintain the position of your testimony concerning the blood of the Lamb, and victory will be maintained through the blood of the everlasting covenant.