

# THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

by Horatius Bonar, D.D.

*'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. 'Thou shalt bruise His heel' was the first reference to it. The *bruised heel* of the woman's seed was to be the foundationstone 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. That truth was,— 'Victory for the sinner through the blood of One who was to be slain.' 'Overcoming by *the blood* of the Lamb' is the meaning of the first promise.

'The blood is the life' (Deut 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 sinneth, it shall die. If, then, another life is to be taken for our life, and another death is to stand 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 till another death comes (in the symbolic form of blood), and washes it away. When the sinner receives God's testimony to the blood, 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. *It contains the good news* (Heb 12:24).—It 'speaketh 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. *It 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 soul 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. *It is the atonement* (Exo 30:10).— 'Aaron shall *make an atonement* upon the horns of the altar with *the blood* of the sin-offering of *atonements*.' '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 maketh an *atonement* for the soul' (Lev 17:11). The Old Testament word 'atone' means 'to cover'; and the blood is that which 'covers' sin, so that it becomes hidden and undiscernible 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, personal *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. *It is the redemption* (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18,19; Rev 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' (Eph 1:14). Redemption by blood is our gospel,—the redemption-money presented fully by the redeeming One to the 'lawful captive,' to the imprisoned and exiled sinner. He who believeth enters into possession of all that it purchases.

V. *It is the bringing nigh* (Eph 2:13).—The far off are made nigh by the blood. It is the blood that removes the distance; that brings God nigh to us, and us nigh to God. It annihilates all distance and all variance. The blood brings about the meeting between us and God. Incarnation is not the bringing nigh, nor the thing which brings us nigh; it is merely the first step in a process, which, had it not ended in the blood-shedding, had been all in vain. It is the blood that emboldens us to draw nigh to God, and justifies God in drawing nigh 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. *It contains the cleansing* (1 John 1:7).—This is spoken of also as ‘purging’ (Heb 9:14,22), and as ‘washing’ (Rev 1:5); and it is to this that Zechariah refers when he speaks of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness (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’ (Psa 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,—and as able to purge and purify.

VII. *It contains the peace* (Col 1:20).—‘Peace through the blood of His cross,’ for ‘He is our peace’ (Eph 2:14); and because of the blood God ‘is pacified towards us for all that we have done’ (Eze 16:63). It is the blood that has made the peace, for it removes that which produced the variance and dispeace. 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. *It contains the pardon* (Heb 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 (Heb 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; and this pardon is presented to the sinner, and becomes the property of every one who is willing to take it thus freely from God.

IX. *It contains justification* (Rom 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 that condemneth?’ The blood sets us right in conscience and in law with God. It justifies the ungodly.

X. *It contains that which makes white* (Rev 7:14).—‘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 (Matt 17:2); the angel-ropes (Matt 28:3); the heavenly clothing (Rev 4:4); the judgment throne (Rev 20:11). Whiter than snow or wool, white as the garments of Christ,—nay, as the ‘head and hair’ of Christ (Rev 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. *It contains the sanctifying* (Heb 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 (without 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. *It contains the power to conquer* (Rev 12:11).—‘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 we need. 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. *It contains our right of entrance into the holiest* (Heb 10:19).—He entered ‘by His own blood’ (Heb 9:12). He gives us this blood as our right of entrance too. The way is opened; the veil is rent; the entrance is sprinkled and consecrated by His blood. Let us draw near! The blood removes all cause of dread, all possibility of rejection, nay, 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. *It 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’ (Heb 13:20); the ‘covenant of

peace' (Isa 54:10); 'the new covenant' (Jer 31:31); the covenant which is absolute and unconditional; which not only gives to each sinner who believes a present standing before God, of favour and love, but which secures his eternal future beyond the possibility of a second fall. The blood of the covenant makes us safe for ever. O blood-stained covenant, ordered in all things and sure, what a foundation art thou for our faith to rest upon, and for our hope to rejoice in! Yes, and the ages to come are all contained within thine ample compass.

XV. *It contains drink for the soul.*—'My blood is drink indeed' (John 6:55). It quenches the thirst of the soul,—the thirst or parching produced by an evil conscience and a sense of wrath, which dries up the frame like a potsherd (Psa 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. *It contains life* (John 6:53).—'Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye 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 we are washed with them and made clean.

XVII. *It contains protection* (Exo 12:13; Heb 11:28).—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, even in the dark night when we cannot see it, and bids the sword pass by.

XVIII. *It contains separation from the world* (Heb 13:11).—As the Sin-offering, Jesus suffered without 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, nay, crucifies Him afresh. Let us keep ourselves unspotted not only from the world as such, but from a worldly Church,—worldly professors, who, instead of bearing Christ's reproach, bring reproach upon Him.

XIX. *It contains resurrection* (Heb 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 effect 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,—nay, 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. *It contains condemnation* (Matt 27:4,25; Acts 5:28; Heb 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 guilty 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 sets at nought 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 for ever.

Yet still the value and the virtue of the blood remain. It has lost none of its efficacy. It can still cleanse, and redeem, and purify. It can still pacify the conscience and reconcile to 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 availeth. 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 fulness to himself; the whole value of the blood passeth over to him that believeth, 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.

## APPENDIX.

The resurrection of Christ must no doubt be kept in view. We preach a risen Christ; and in His resurrection we see God's acceptance of His substitution, and the assurance of our justification by that work which resurrection *sealed*, as having been *finished by the death* of the Substitute. But still what follows the cross and the death is not *part* of the sacrificial work, but the *result* of it. It may be well to note the different effects, relating to the believer, which God connects with the death of His Son:—

(1.) *Death unto sin* (1 Peter 2:24).—He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we might be 'dead to sins.'

(2.) *Life unto righteousness* (1 Peter 2:24).—Our new life unto righteousness is thus traced to the sin-bearing work upon the tree. The apostle links this life with *the cross*.

(3.) *Healing* (1 Peter 2:24).— 'By whose stripes ye were healed.' From the cross flow the medicine and the health, as the cure did from the brazen serpent.

(4.) *Reconciliation* (Rom 5:10).— 'Reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son.' In the 9th verse we are said to be *justified* by His *blood* (not by His resurrection); in the 10th we are said to be *reconciled* by His *death*.

(5.) *Destruction of Satan* (Heb 2:14).—Through *death*, He destroyed him who has the power of death. The *cross* is the destruction of the devil.

(6.) *Deliverance of the troubled* (Heb 2:15).— 'To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' This is a very remarkable passage, as showing the power of the cross, not only in abolishing death and him who had the power of death, but in so bringing life and immortality to light that troubled souls in bondage by fear of death are set free. This deliverance is *confirmed* to us by His resurrection, but it is His death that *secures* it.

(7.) *Redemption of transgressions* (Heb 9:15).—As Mediator of the New Covenant, He dies, and by this death there is the 'redemption of the transgressions under the law.'

(8.) *The promise of eternal inheritance* (Heb 9:15).—This death has reference to them that are 'called.' To them, through the death of the Mediator, the promise comes, and through the same death the inheritance comes.

(9.) *Eternal life with Him* (1 Thess 5:10).— 'Who *died* for us, that we should *live* with Him.' His death and our resurrection-life are thus linked together.

These are some of the many passages relating to the death of the Substitute. From these we learn the value and the power of that death as securing pardon, righteousness, and acceptance. Justification in and by a *crucified Christ* is the clear testimony of Scripture. The blessings flowing out of resurrection, and ascension, and intercession are not for a moment to be lost sight of; but in so far as representation, or substitution, or acceptance is concerned, we have to do directly with the blood and the cross. The sweet savour of the *sacrifice* is that which envelopes us so as to make us acceptable and well-pleasing to God. Of that sacrifice (as in the case of Noah) God smells the sweet savour; and because of *that* He deals with us as righteous, honours us as precious, and blesses us as sons. The divine preciousness of that sacrifice as satisfying justice, honouring God, magnifying the law, suffices to procure for us, by its *imputed value*, what did not belong to us, and what nothing else could have given. That which satisfies righteousness is that which constitutes us righteous. It was the *death*, not the *resurrection* of Christ, that both declared and satisfied the righteousness of God, that proclaimed both the condemnation and the acquittal of the sinner. Yet there are some in our day calling themselves Christians to whom the cross is a stumbling-block, who tell us that the cross was not the place of atonement, who reject imputation as an unreality or a falsehood, and who profess to go to God on the footing of an infused resurrection-righteousness. Thus have men ceased to glory in the cross—nay, have made it of none effect. They have little sympathy with him who said, 'I have determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and HIM CRUCIFIED' (1 Cor 2:2).