

The Testimony of the Blood (continued)

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There is nothing which Satan fears so terribly and contests so fiercely as a true and living testimony concerning the Blood of the Lord Jesus: not a teaching, doctrine, creed or phraseology, but that which is wrought out in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore necessary for us to seek to recognise this fact, to understand, as far as we can, why it is so, and to know our position of victory because of the Blood. Unto this threefold apprehension we shall begin at the ultimate issue of the testimony, which is Â–

THE DIVINE SEED IN PROSPERITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

It is this that Satan cannot bear to contemplate, and against which he is bitterly set, because it represents a menace to his kingdom at every point.

There is a very great significance attached to the introduction of the book of Exodus with Â“the names of the sons of Israel, who came into EgyptÂ”. The title Â“sons of IsraelÂ” represents their dignity as sons of Â“a prince of GodÂ”. They came into Egypt and were in great prosperity and strength, while yet a separate and unabsorbed people. This dignity, prosperity and power came to be regarded as a distinct peril to the king of Egypt, and he projected a plan for humbling them, bringing them into bondage, and making them rather to contribute to his own prosperity and power.

Thus Exodus presents, firstly, GodÂ’s mind concerning the princely dignity and spiritual prosperity and ascendancy of the Â“sonsÂ”; then the activity and object of the adversary concerning them; and finally the Divine thought and intention established in the realm of Â“far above all rule and authorityÂ” in virtue of the shed blood of chapter twelve. So then, sonship and sovereignty are the two factors present throughout. Sonship is the basic principle. Sovereignty is the issue involved in the conflict. The Blood is the instrument by which both are established. Â“These are the names of the sons of Â‘the Prince of God’...Â” is the introduction. Â“Let my son go, that he may serve meÂ”, is the challenge to Pharaoh; and Â“Thou hast refused... behold, I will slay thy sonÂ”, is the sovereign factor at issue (Ex. 4:23).

Now these elements are carried forward throughout all the Scriptures. It does not matter where you look: that which lies behind all the conflicts in the history of the people of God concerns the existence of a Divine seed in prosperity and power Â– spiritually - and the factor which is mainly involved is that of the altar and the blood. Everything hangs on that. This all heads up and finds its supreme expression in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. As with Moses typically, so with Him anti-typically, there was the recognition of the one through whom this Divine seed would be constituted in its Â“authority... over all the power of the enemyÂ” (Luke 10:19). So from birth a Â‘dead set’ was made for His destruction - not only by direct onslaught, but by subtle subterfuge to get Him to act upon a level of self by which the Divine protection would be forfeited.

The point at which we meet this whole matter of the testimony of the Blood is with Â–

AN ELECT IN BONDAGE

There is abundant Scripture to show what was the original thought and intention of God for His spiritual seed, and this is a very important matter for the apprehension of the LordÂ’s people. But what particularly concerns us now is its realisation. It is not a little impressive that of the twenty-seven Â‘books’ of the New Testament at least twenty-one have to do with the bringing of the LordÂ’s children into their right spiritual place. And how many of them are directly concerned with the matter of the actual or threatening loss of spiritual prosperity and ascendancy through some form of bondage. There is the bondage of iniquity, of sin and sins, of the Law, of tradition, of fear, of the flesh, of the carnal mind, of reason, of the righteousness of the flesh, the wisdom of the flesh, the Â‘spirituality’ of the flesh, and many other forms of bondage. The bonds of Satan are very numerous, and he suits the kind to the case. A prince in chains, a member of the seed royal in servile oppression, is a pitiable sight, and this is what the Devil delights in. The Â“man-child”, whether individual as in Moses and Christ (Exodus 1 and Matthew 2), or corporate as in Revelation 12, is the object of the DragonÂ’s venom. This is the Divine seed.

Think of the sons of the Â‘Prince of God’ engaged in building store-cities for Pharaoh, and thus adding wealth and glory to his world-system instead of serving the Lord in freedom and victory! Such is the state of the elect, more or less. From the position of servitude to sin, self, the world and the Devil before salvation, through all the stages and phases of spiritual weakness and defeat to paralysing introspection and spiritual self-analysis, the true dignity of princeliness, of sonship, is assailed.

Now, if we did but know it, there is always some ground for the bondage. Satan must have ground. His power cannot function without ground. He was utterly impotent in the case of the Lord Jesus because there was no ground. "The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). The ground which issues in defeat and bondage at the hands of the adversary is as varied as the bondage itself.

Is it the natural condition of the sinfulness of human nature, that what is in man is quite unfit and unsuitable for the presence of God? Is it that the Divine will represents a standard of perfection in moral excellence which sets back from God even the very best among men? Is it a secret thing, hidden in the inward parts, which in itself becomes a weapon in the enemy's hand to knock us down? Is it sin done in ignorance, where the intention was good, but where fuller light reveals that it was wrong after all? Is it sin unconsciously committed, in the sense that we did not even know that we did the thing?

Yes, all these, and many more, are grounds that Satan uses - and rightly so, if we fail in one all-embracing respect. This failure is in the matter of recognising the virtue of the precious Blood, and the worth of Him who shed it.

In saying this we are but bringing into view the offerings of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. A close study of these offerings will reveal two things. One is that God has searched out sin and tracked it to its most hidden and secret lair, even to the place of unconsciousness. The accidental, unwitting, and unsuspected is all taken into His consideration. He regards sin now as a state, not merely as a matter of a deliberate act. It is here, universal, operating in innumerable ways and finding common ground of affection in the whole race. This all comes out so clearly in a careful reading of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

But, having tracked sin to its remotest haunt, God has made provision for dealing with it to the very last suggestion.

1. A whole Burnt offering, that the believer may stand accepted and perfect in relation to all the will of God (Col. 4:12). (Lev. 1; Heb. 10).
2. A Meal offering, that he may be able to come into possession of moral perfection, not his own, but presented by faith. (Lev. 2; Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 10:10; 13:21, etc.).
3. A Peace offering, that there may be not only access and standing, but fellowship and oneness with God. (Lev. 3; Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:10, etc.).
4. A Sin offering, that sin in its more positive aspects, and sin in ignorance and without consciousness, may not interfere with living fellowship by bringing in spiritual death, either through our own failure or through the contamination of contact. (Lev. 4, 5, etc.).

And not only in the matter of our relationship with God does the Blood make an all-sufficient provision, but in co-operation with God by priestly ministry, in effective spiritual service in its many-sidedness.

So, then, the first and primary thing in a living testimony to the complete overthrow of the dominion of Satan and the destruction (bringing to nought) of his works is a due and adequate apprehension and appreciation of the Lord Jesus in the value of His Blood.

There is something almighty in the death of Jesus Christ. Many of God's people have failed to recognise the important distinction between His crucifixion and His death. The crucifixion is man's side. The death is His own. All the crosses ever made, and all the men who ever conceived them, could never have brought about the death of the Lord Jesus, apart from His own voluntary act of laying down His life. "I lay down my life... No man taketh it from me... I lay it down of myself. I have power (jurisdiction) to lay it down, and I have power (jurisdiction) to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17,18).

The preaching of Christ crucified is not the preaching merely of what men did to Him, but of what He ALLOWED men to do, and, in and through what they did, what He did. The DEATH of Christ, in its real meaning, is not man's act, nor is it the Devil's act. Satan and men had made many unsuccessful attempts to kill Him, but HIS hour had not come. HE fixes the time for what HE will do. The rulers said, "Not during the feast" (Mark 14:2), but the Lord Jesus took it out of their hands, and out of the hands of Judas, and precipitated it on that day in the Upper Room; so deftly heading up that Judas was as one under authority: "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27).

When He 'lays down' His life that He may 'take it again' there is infinitude in the deliberate act, and it relates to universal sovereignty. Sin, as the principle; the old creation, as the sphere; Satan, as the ruler in that realm; death, as the consequence; and judgment, as the inevitable prospect and reality: all are involved in the

death of Christ. That entire ground was dealt with, and that regime brought to an end, in that death. The whole thing centres in the Person of the Lord Jesus. The same person must be able both to act as representative of man rejected of God because of sin, and, as representative, receive all the judgment of God upon man and sin, and yet at the same time, because sin is not inherent in Him, but in Himself He is utterly sinless, render death and hell incapable of holding Him. There never was such a one, other than Jesus Christ: Son of man - Son of God.

The pouring out of His Blood was, on the one side, His voluntary yielding to wrath and destruction from the face of God, as Man for man; and, on the other side, a saying in effect to death, the Devil and the grave, "I concede you all your claims unto the last atom, and exhaust all your demands, in being made sin and a curse. But you have another in Me also, over whom you have no power or rights, because you have no ground in Him. You cannot hold Me - I defy you; and, what is more, I now take you as My prisoners. Henceforth I am your Lord, and I will plunder your domain and rob you of your spoil."

"O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor, 15:55).

"Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes".
"...He invaded death's abode
And robbed him of his sting".
"...He hath crushed beneath His rod
The world's proud rebel king.
He plunged in His imperial strength
To gulfs of darkness down,
He brought His trophy up at length,
The foiled usurper's crown".

So He, because of His sinless perfection, can stand in complete acceptance with God, suitable to God, and this representatively as man (though more than man), His Blood, therefore, representing His sinless and victorious life, is given to us, and in virtue of it there is constituted that princely seed in all the good of His triumph. This does not make us sinlessly perfect, but He who is in us is so.

What remains to bring us into that good is a spiritual appreciation and apprehension of the transcendent greatness of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit revealing Him in us; and then the link of faith unto obedience between what we are not and what He is. The bridge is faith. Some act as though it were struggle or puzzle, or any one of a number of things which are in the nature of self-effort. It will be found, indeed, that faith is no mere passive acquiescence. But it is not the DEGREE of faith only, but the OBJECT of faith. It is, after all, the place which CHRIST has in the apprehension of HIS people which makes for the prosperity and ascendancy which should characterize them. The supreme days of Israel's history were those when Christ in type was largest and most dominating. The Feast of the Passover was the focal point and the pivot. There never was such rejoicing as then; and, in later times, when idolatry had gained a strong footing, it was after the restoration of this feast that the people instinctively returned to destroy the false system.

Thus the testimony of the Blood is basic to victory, ascendancy, and spiritual prosperity, and is the most deadly force against all the works of the adversary.