

"THE PRECIOUS BLOOD."

"Blood, blood! strange, why so much about blood in the Bible?" said Mr. M_____ one day, laying down the sacred volume on the table. "Exodus," continued he, "is filled with it, and so is Leviticus. The historical parts of the Old Testament are crowded with accounts of sacrifices; and so are the prophetic; and as to the New Testament, it is the most prominent thing in it – strange!" He sat awhile in silent thought, while his mind ran over the principal contents of the great volume with which he had been familiar from childhood. "Why," said he, "every one of the patriarchs, from Abel downwards, shed the blood of victims, and offered sacrifices on altars. Noah did, and so did Abraham, over and over. Then Moses instituted a whole system of sacrifices: – there was the blood of the Passover, and the blood of the consecration of everything that was consecrated – altars, vessels, priests, etc., and the blood of all the cleansings of lepers and persons ceremonially defiled, and the blood of all the different offerings – burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, sin-offerings; and the blood of various victims on the great day of yearly atonement; and then there was the regular sacrifice of a lamb every morning and every evening. Why, the Jewish priests were shedding blood every day of their lives, and often many times a day – and this for centuries, and sometimes offering hecatombs of sacrifices, as in the days of Solomon, at the consecration of the temple, when literally rivers of blood streamed from the place of sacrifice. And this blood was all by God's appointment, too, and continued for ages, existing until Judaism gave place to Christianity. And then, when I turn to the New Testament, I find the Lord Jesus solemnly insisting on the necessity of drinking his blood in order to have eternal life, and speaking of his blood being shed for the remission of sins; and Paul, in Romans, speaks of propitiation through blood, and being justified through blood; and in Ephesians, of redemption through blood, and being made nigh by blood; and in Colossians of peace through blood; and Hebrews is completely crimson with this doctrine from first to last; and Peter speaks of the sprinkling of the blood, and John of the cleansing of the blood, and Revelation is interspersed with songs concerning the

blood of the Lamb. Really, the Bible seems to me to be stained through and through with the scarlet dye of blood; and when I soberly ask myself, what it all means, I am at a loss for a satisfactory reply. I know the doctrines commonly taught about the remission of sin through the bloodshedding; but what the true connection is between blood and pardon I do not understand. I wish I did. Some people seem to have rest to their souls in views they entertain about it. Whatever that rest is, I have never experienced it. I know I am a sinner. The thought of *eternity* is altogether dreadful to me. What would I give if it were otherwise. Oh, if I could only be what I ought to be, and do what I ought to do! But I feel powerless to obey God when I try. I cannot love him; I cannot keep that high and holy law which forbids me an evil thought or feeling, however transient, and accepts nothing but absolute perfection. As to delighting in such a law, I cannot do it; and if I could for the future, the sins I have already committed would be sufficient to condemn me. God be merciful to me! Oh, that he would! I am weary, weary. Yes, more, I am wicked and helpless too. I believe there is help for me in him. Oh, that he would grant it! But why have I not asked it? I have said prayers, but my heart has not really prayed. I feel now as if I *must* pray. Oh, is there not some secret power in that blood which the Bible speaks of to cleanse me? The thought of it encourages me to kneel down and cast myself at God's feet, and cry to him to have mercy upon me. Mercy is what I want. Nothing else will do. 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

So saying, he fell on his knees, and covered his face with his hands; his bosom heaved, sobs burst from his burdened heart; petitions and confessions poured out in broken sentences. His whole soul seemed absorbed; everything else seemed forgotten. At length he rose, and, clearing his eyes from tears, sat down, and again opened the Bible. The page which lay before him was one in Leviticus, Chap. 17; his eye fell upon the eleventh verse, "For 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." As he read these words, a beam of light seemed to shine into his soul; the word "*life*" arrested his attention. It appeared to stand out in large letters before his mind. He saw that God connects "the life" and "the blood." "The

life" is *in* "the blood." That precious thing we call "life," – that thing which man esteems most precious, is in "the blood." And this is what gives "the blood" its value. He saw blood to be the rich equivalent to life. Blood and life are one. To shed blood is to take life. The words blood and life are interchangeable. For general purposes it matters not which you use. The one represents the other.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, all the passages he remembered in the Scriptures, in which the word "blood" occurred, seemed illuminated with the precious thought of "life." In this blood was "life." Every sacrifice was the sacrifice of "life." Thus he saw in the Divine law yearly sacrifices of life, and daily sacrifices of life; every morning and every evening were marked by the offering of life; and all the sprinkling of blood on persons and things to be hallowed, was but the putting upon them the scarlet token of life – of life taken – life poured out – life sacrificed. He saw in all this a constant sacrifice of life on the sinner's behalf. It was altogether for the sinner. All this pouring out of life was for the sake of transgressors. When any sinned, they were to bring a victim to the altar of God and have it slain. The sinner was to lay his hand on the head of the victim, and then the victim was to be slain. The one sinned, the other suffered. The one *forfeited* his life, the other *lost* it. The judgment passed from the one to the other, from the guilty to the innocent. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Here a man sinned, but the sentence of death for his sin is not executed upon him, but upon the victim which he brings to the altar of God. Thus life is taken because of sin, but not the life of the sinner. The life of the innocent victim is taken, and the life of the guilty sinner spared. Here is life for life; life exchanged for life; one life given for another life; one life taken instead of another life; the sentence executed, yet the sinner spared. Oh, justice and mercy joined! Full justice and full mercy; no blot on either; no imperfection in either. Mercy sparing the transgressor, while Justice slays him in the person of his Substitute. Justice asks no more. Mercy can do no more. The law has its free course, and so has grace. Both are glorified.

As he thus meditated, thoughts of JESUS began to fill his mind. His was the life thus "taken from the earth." All the countless lives of victims

slain on Jewish altars were but the emblems of his one life "poured out." All told of him. All were shadows of his sacrifice. They could not take away sin: he does. They were nothing: he is all. His own words were, "The Son of Man came to give *his life* a ransom [*Greek – lutron* – a price] for many;" Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45; "the Good Shepherd giveth *his life* for the sheep." "I lay down *my life*." And the words of John are, "Hereby know we the love of God, because he [Jesus] laid down *his life* for us." While thinking on these passages, he began to see a connection between his own sins and the death of Jesus. *My life*, thought he, has been forfeited; and he loved me and gave *his life* for mine. His precious life given for my worthless life! His life for my life! Yea, since his life has been taken, mine shall never be, for I believe in him; and he says of all who believe in him, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never *perish*." Joy now began to flow into his heart, and a feeling of gratitude and love to Jesus. How wonderful the thought! His life and my life linked together. The one given for the other. His for mine – himself for me! And I a sinner and an heir of wrath, while he is the Son of God, and heir of all things! His holy, precious, sacred life – a life linked with eternal glory, laid down because mine was forfeited, and because he loved me; that my life might be spared, that I might *live*. Gladly, then, will I give him the life he has redeemed! Henceforth, thought he, henceforth I live, not to myself, but to him who died for me and rose again.

Once more Mr. M. knelt, not to pray, but to praise! He had found the rest he sought – found it in precious blood!

Reader, have thine eyes been opened thus?

– *H. G. Guinness*.

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