The Atoning Blood

By Lois J. Stucky

In this season when many Christians commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ, let us give due honor to the precious Blood of Christ, the Son of God, shed for us on the cross. Sermons have been preached, articles have been published and books have been written to explain and extol the place of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in man's redemption. Briefly in this article we will look at some teachings of the gifted Bible teacher and preacher, Andrew Murray, written perhaps 100 years ago, to enhance our appreciation of the Blood of the Lamb of God shed for us.

"Without Shedding of Blood Is No Remission of Sins" (Hebrews 9:22)

Andrew Murray points out the following: the first act of worship recorded in the Bible, that of Able's offering of "the firstlings of his flock," involved the shedding of blood. It is a testimony that there is no approach to God, no fellowship with Him by faith apart from the blood. The first recorded act of Noah after he left the ark was the offering of a burnt sacrifice to God, involving the shedding of blood. When Abraham was about to obey God by offering his son Isaac, his hand was stayed, but the blood of a ram was offered in Isaac's place.

Four hundred years later, through the lamb slain and the blood sprinkled on the door posts in Egypt, God taught His people that life was possible only through the blood of a lamb given in their place and appropriated. Later, when God gave the covenant to Israel through Moses, the covenant was established by the sprinkling of blood on the altar and then on the book of the covenant and then on the people, with the declaration, "This is the blood of the covenant." (See Exodus 24:8). Thus was man brought into covenant relationship with God. Andrew Murray points out that in this last case, the blood was sprinkled not on the door posts nor the altar, but on the people themselves, making the application closer and more powerful.

Continuing his teaching, Murray says that following the covenant made with His chosen people, God gave careful, explicit instructions about the making of a tabernacle where they were to meet with Him and where He would lovingly abide in their midst. And the blood was the center of all this. On the altar of burnt offering, from morning to evening, there was the sprinkling of the blood. In the Holy Place on the golden altar of incense the blood was constantly sprinkled. Beyond in the Most Holy Place where God dwelt, He was approached "not without blood." There the High Priest alone entered once a year to bring in the blood and to worship God.

"Always and for everything," Murray writes, "the blood is the one thing needful. At the consecration of the house, or of the priests, at the birth of a child, in the deepest penitence on account of sin, in the highest festival, always and in everything, the way to fellowship with God is through the blood alone."

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The Blood of the New Covenant

Then many centuries later, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ came, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Throughout His ministry He spoke of giving life to us by dying for us, by shedding His blood for us. When He instituted the Lord's Supper He said, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood that is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it" (Mt. 26:28). Says Murray, "'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' Without remission of sins there is no life. But by the shedding of His blood Christ has obtained a new life for us. By what He calls 'the drinking of His blood' He shares His life with us. The blood shed in the atonement, frees us from the guilt of sin. It frees us from death, which is the punishment of sin. The blood, which by faith we drink, bestows on us His life. The blood He shed was, in the first place *for* us, and is then given *to* us."

The book of Hebrews, points out Murray, was written to show that the symbolism of the Old Covenant has given way to the blessed New Covenant in Jesus' Blood. Still the blood remains prominent.

"By His own blood he [Jesus] entered in once into the holy place" (Heb. 9:12). "The blood of Christ…shall purge your conscience" (verse 14). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). "Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling" (12:24). "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate" (13:12). "God…brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus…through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (13:20).

"By such words," says Murray, "the Holy Spirit teaches us that the blood is really the central power of our entire redemption. "Not without blood" is as valid in the New Testament as in the Old. Nothing but the blood of Jesus, shed in His death for sin, can cover sin on God's side or remove it on ours."

Place of the Blood in Heaven

In heaven the Blood retains its prominence. Murray recounts scenes there: "On the throne John saw 'a Lamb as it had been slain' (Rev. 5:6). As the elders fell down before the Lamb they sang a new song saying, 'Thou art worthy…for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood' (verses 8,9). Later on when he saw the great company which no man could number, he was told in reply to his question as to who they were, 'They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Rev. 7:14). Then again, when he heard the song of victory over the defeat of Satan, its strain was, 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb' (Rev. 12:11)."

Place of the Blood in Our Lives

As Murray points out, Christ's blood has satisfied the law and righteousness of God. Through the shedding of His blood Christ has overcome the power of sin and defeated death as well. Hebrews 9:12 says Christ opened Heaven for us: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he [Jesus] entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." What a redemption it is— from slavery to Satan and from the curse of the

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law and sin! We are reconciled to God, pardoned through His blood, cleansed, sanctified, and made a partaker of His holiness.

We have only begun to look into all that the Blood of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ means to our Christian lives. We will hear much about the cross this season. Might we have a renewed appreciation, and a greater appropriation through faith, of what Christ did for us by dying on the cross. Might we have a keener comprehension of what it means that we have been crucified and resurrected with Christ (Romans, chapter 6), or for some of us it might be a first-time revelation. Whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, let us first examine ourselves, as the Apostle Paul directs (1 Cor. 11:28), and then, with ever deepening gratitude and faith, proclaim as we partake, our Lord's death and resurrection until He comes again. We exclaim with the songwriter, "Precious Lamb of Glory, love's most wondrous story; heart of God's redemption of man; worship the Lamb of Glory!"

The victorious, overcoming life provided through the cross and the resurrection is well expounded in Dr. Duewel's article, "Resurrection Power For You Today," beginning on page five. It is essential for God's people to press into this victory "*today*," as the title indicates. It is vital if we are to be the faithful intercessors God would have us be for the vast needs all around us, and if we are to faithfully fulfill the ministry God has given us to do in this late hour!

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