The Blood Of The Cross

By Andrew Murray

"[God] having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether things in earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20).

The Apostle Paul uses here an expression of deep significance -- "the blood of His cross." We know how greatly he valued the expression "the cross of Christ." It expressed, in a brief phrase, the entire power and blessing of the death of our Lord for our redemption. It was the subject of his preaching, the hope and glory of his life. By the expression here used he shows how, on the one side the blood possesses its value from the cross on which it was shed, and on the other, that it is through the blood that the cross reveals its effect and power. Thus the cross and the blood throw reflected light on one another.

The Disposition from Which the Cross Derived Its Power

We are so accustomed in speaking about the Cross of Christ to think only of the work that was done there for us. We take too little notice of that from which that work derives its value -- the inner disposition of our Lord of which the cross was only the outward expression. Scripture does not place in the foreground as most important the weighty and bitter sufferings of the Lord. These are often emphasized for the purpose of awakening religious feelings. Scripture emphasizes the inner disposition of the Lord which led Him to the cross, and inspired Him while on it.

Neither does Scripture direct attention only to the work which the Lord accomplished for us on the cross. It directs special attention to the work that the cross accomplished in Him, and which through Him must yet be accomplished in us also.

This appears not only from our Lord's words which He spoke from the cross, but from what He said when on three different occasions He had previously told His disciples that they must take up their cross and follow Him. More than once He spoke thus when foretelling His own crucifixion. The thought He wished especially to impress upon them in connection with the cross was that of fellowship with and conformity to Him.

And that this did not consist in merely outward sufferings and persecutions, but in an inward disposition, appears from what He often added, "Deny yourselves and take up the cross." This is what He desired them to do.

Our Lord further teaches us that neither for Him nor for His disciples does the bearing of the cross begin when a material cross is laid upon the shoulders. No! He carried the cross all through His life. What became visible on Golgotha was a manifestation of the disposition which inspired His whole life.

Phoca PDF

What then did the bearing of the cross mean for the Lord Jesus? And what end could it serve for Him? We know that the evil of sin is seen in the change it brought about both in the disposition of man toward God, as well as in that of God toward man. With man it resulted in his fall from God, or enmity against God. With God it resulted in His turning away from man or His wrath. In the first we see the terribleness of sin's tyranny over man. In the second, we see the terribleness of the guilt of sin, demanding the judgment of God on man.

The Lord Jesus, who came to deliver man from sin as a whole had to deal with the power of sin as well as with its guilt, first the one, and then the other. Although we separate these two things for the sake of making truth clear, sin is ever a unity. Therefore we need to understand not only that our Lord by His atonement on the cross removed the guilt of sin, but that this was made possible by the victory He had first won over the power of sin. It is the glory of the cross that it was the divine means by which both these objects were accomplished.

The Lord Jesus had to bring to naught the power of sin. He could do this only in His own person. Therefore He came in the closest possible likeness of sinful flesh, in the weakness of flesh, with the fullest capacity to be tempted as we are. From His baptism with the Holy Spirit, and the temptation of Satan which followed, up to the fearful soul agony in Gethsemane, and the offering of Himself on the cross, His life was a ceaseless strife against self-will and self-honor, against the temptations of the flesh, and of the world. He was tempted to reach by fleshly or worldly means His goal of setting up His kingdom. Every day He had to take up and carry His cross, that is, to lose His own life and will by going out of Himself and doing and speaking nothing but what He had seen or heard from the Father.

That which took place in the temptation in the wilderness and in the agony of Gethsemane -- at the beginning and end of His public ministry -- is only a peculiarly clear manifestation of the disposition which characterized His whole life. He was tempted to the sin of self-assertion but He overcame the temptation to satisfy lawful desires -- from the first temptation to obtain bread to satisfy His hunger, until the last that He might not have to drink the bitter cup of death -- that He might be subject to the will of the Father.

So He offered up Himself and His life. He denied Himself and took up His cross. He learned obedience and became perfect. In His own person He gained a complete victory over the power of sin till He was able to testify that the evil one, "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me."

His death on the cross was the last and most glorious achievement in His personal victory over the power of sin. From this the atoning death of the cross derived its value. A reconciliation was necessary, if guilt was to be removed. No one can contend with sin without at the same time coming into conflict with the wrath of God. These two cannot be separated from one another. The Lord Jesus desired to deliver man from his sin. He could not do this save by suffering death as Mediator and in that death suffering the curse of God's wrath against sin, and bearing it away.

But His supreme power to remove guilt and the curse did not lie merely in the fact that He endured so much pain and suffering of death, but that He endured it all *in willing obedience to the Father,* for the maintenance and glorification of His righteousness. It was this disposition of

Phoca PDF

self-sacrifice, of bearing of the cross willingly, which bestowed on the cross its power.

So the Scripture says: "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name" (Phil. 2:8-9).

And again: "Yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:8-9). It is because Jesus broke down and conquered the power of sin first in His personal life that He can remove from us the guilt of sin and thus deliver us from both its power and guilt. The cross is the divine sign, proclaiming to us that the way, the only way to the life of God, is through the yielding up in sacrifice of the self-life.

This spirit of obedience, this sacrifice of self, which bestowed on the cross its infinite value, bestowed that value also on the blood of the cross. Here again God reveals to us the secret of the power of that blood. That blood is the proof of obedience unto death of the Beloved Son. It is proof of that disposition which chose to offer the blood, to shed it, to lose His own life rather than commit the sin of pleasing Himself. It is proof of the sacrifice of everything, even life itself, to glorify the Father. The life which dwelt in that blood -- the heart from which it flowed -- glowing with love and devotion to God and His will, was one of entire obedience and consecration to Him.

If that blood, living and powerful through the Holy Spirit, comes into contact with our hearts, and if we rightly understand what the blood of the cross means, is it possible that that blood should not impart its holy nature to us?

But as the blood could not have been shed apart from the sacrifice of "self" on the cross, so it cannot be received or enjoyed apart from a similar sacrifice of "self." That blood will bring to us a "self" sacrificing disposition, and in our work there will be a conformity to and an imitation of the crucified One, making self-sacrifice the highest and most blessed law of our lives.

The blood is a living, spiritual, heavenly power. It will bring the soul that is entirely surrendered to it, to see and know by experience that there is no entrance into the full life of God, save by the self-sacrifice of the cross.

The Power Which the Cross Has Obtained by This Disposition

The power of the cross in heaven has been manifested in the entire removal of everything that could bring about a separation from God, or awaken His wrath. In Christ we are granted the utmost freedom of entrance to and the most intimate fellowship with God. Peace has been made and proclaimed. Peace reigns in heaven. We are perfectly reconciled to God and have been received again into His friendship.

All this is through the power of the cross. Oh, that we had eyes to see how completely the veil has been rent, how free and unhindered is our access to God, and how freely His blessing may flow toward us! There is now nothing, absolutely nothing, to hinder the fullness of the love and power of God from coming to us and working in us, save only our unbelief, our slowness of

Phoca PDF

heart. Let us meditate upon the power which the blood has exercised in heaven till our unbelief itself is conquered and our right to these heavenly powers by faith fills our lives with joy.

But the powerful effect of the cross with God in heaven, in the blotting out of guilt, and our renewed union with God, is as we have seen, inseparable from that other effect -- the breaking down of the authority of sin over man, by the sacrifice of "self." Therefore Scripture teaches us that the cross not only works out a disposition or desire to make such a sacrifice, but it really bestows the power to do so, and completes the work.

This appears with wonderful clearness in the Epistle to the Galatians. In one place the cross is spoken of as the reconciliation for guilt. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). But there are three other places where the cross is even more plainly spoken of as the victory over the power of sin, as the power to put to death the "I" of the self life, of the flesh, and of the world.

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). In these passages our union with Christ, the crucified One, and the conformity to Him resulting from that union, are represented as the result of the power exercised on us by the cross.

To understand this we must remember that when Jesus chose the cross, and took it up, and carried it, and finally died on it, He did this as the second Adam, as the Head and Surety of His people. That which He did had and retains power for them, and exercises that power in those who understand and believe this. The life which He bestows on them is a life in which the cross is the most outstanding characteristic.

Our Lord carried His cross all through His entire life as Mediator. By dying on that cross as Mediator, He obtained the life of glory. As the believer is united to Him and receives His life, he receives a life that, through the cross, has overthrown the power of sin, and he can henceforth say, "I am crucified with Christ." "I know that my old man is crucified with Christ"; "I am dead to sin"; "I have crucified the flesh"; "I am crucified to the world" (Rom. 6:6,11).

All these expressions from God's Word refer to something that occurred in a time now past. The Spirit and life of Jesus bestow on believers their share in the victory over sin which was achieved on the cross. And now in the power of this participation and fellowship they live as Jesus lived. They live always as those crucified to themselves, as those who know that their "old man," and "flesh" are crucified so as to be put to death.

In the power of this fellowship they live as Jesus lived. They have the power in all things and all times to choose the cross in spite of the "old man," and the world, to choose the cross and to let it do its work.

The law of life for Jesus was the surrender of His own will to that of the Father, by giving up that life to death, so as to enter upon the heavenly life of redemption -- by the cross, to the

Phoca PDF

throne. So surely as there is a kingdom of sin, under the authority of which we were brought by our connection with the first Adam, so surely had there been set up a new kingdom of grace, in Christ Jesus, under the powerful influence of which we are brought by faith. The marvelous power by which Jesus subdued sin on the cross, lives and works in us. It not only *calls* us to live as He lived, but *enables* us to do so, to adopt the cross as the motto and law of our lives.

Believer, that blood with which you have been sprinkled, under which you live daily, is the blood of the cross. It obtains its power from the fact that it was the complete sacrifice of a life to God. The blood and the cross are inseparably united. The blood comes from the cross. It bears witness to the cross. It leads to the cross. The power of the cross is in that blood.

Every touch of the blood should inspire you with a fresh ability to take the cross as the law of your life. "Not my will but Thine be done" may now in that power, become a song of daily consecration. What the cross teaches you about, it bestows upon you. What it imposes upon you, it makes possible for you. Let the everlasting sprinkling of the blood of the cross be your choice, and through that blood, the disposition as well as the power of the cross will be seen in you.

The Love Which the Cross Reveals Bestows upon Us What the Cross Has Gained

It is only when we understand aright, and receive into our hearts the love of which the cross speaks, that we can experience its full power and blessing. Paul indeed bears witness to this: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Faith in the love of Him "who gave Himself for me" on the cross enables me to live as one who has been crucified with Him.

The cross is the revelation of love. He saw that there was no other way by which His love could redeem those whom He so loved, save by shedding His blood for them on the cross. It is because of this that He would not allow Himself to be turned aside by the terror of the cross, not even when it caused His soul to tremble and shudder.

The cross tells us that He loved us so truly that His love surmounted every difficulty -- the curse of sin, and the hostility of man -- that His love has conquered, and has won us for Himself. The cross is the triumphant symbol of eternal love. By the cross love is seated on the throne, so that from the place of omnipotence it can now do for the beloved ones all that they desire.

What a new and glorious light is thus shed on the demand the cross makes on me, and on what it offers to do for me. Light is shed on the meaning and glory and life of the cross, to which I have been called by the Word -- I, whose flesh is so disposed to go astray that even the promise of the Spirit and the power of heaven seem insufficient to bestow on me the courage I need. But lo! there is something that is better still than the promise of power.

The cross points out to me the living Jesus in His eternal, all-conquering love. Out of love to us He gave Himself up to the cross, to redeem a people for Himself. In this love He accepts of

Phoca PDF

everyone who comes to Him in the fellowship of His cross, to bestow upon them all the blessings that He has obtained on that cross. Now He receives us in the power of His eternal and ever efficacious love, which ceases not for one moment to work out in us what He obtained for us on the cross.

I see it! What we need is a right view of Jesus Himself, and of His all-conquering, eternal love. The blood is the earthly token of the heavenly glory of that love; the blood points to that love. What we need is to behold Jesus Himself in the light of the cross. All the love manifested by the cross is the measure of the love He bears to us today.

The love which was not terrified by any power or opposition of sin will now conquer everything in us that would be a hindrance. The love which triumphed on the accursed tree is strong enough to obtain and maintain a complete victory over us. The love manifested by "a Lamb as it had been slain" in the midst of the throne, bearing always the marks of the cross, lives solely to bestow on us the disposition, and power and the blessing of the cross.

To know Jesus in His love and to live in that love, to have the heart filled with that love, is the greatest blessing that the cross can bring to us. It is the way to the enjoyment of all the blessings of the cross.

Glorious cross! It brings to us and makes known to us the eternal love. The blood is the fruit and power of the cross. The blood is the gift and bestowal of that love. In what a full enjoyment of love those may now live who have been brought into such wonderful contact with the blood, who live every moment under its cleansing.

Beloved Christian whose hope is in the blood of the cross, give yourself up to experience its full blessing. Each drop of that blood points to the surrender and death of self-will, of the "I" life, as the way to God and life in Him. Each drop of that blood assures you of the power of a life, a heavenly life, obtained by Jesus on the cross, to maintain that disposition, that crucified life, in you. Each drop of that blood brings Jesus and His eternal love to you to work out all the blessing of the cross in you and to keep you in that love.

May each thought of the cross and the blood bring you nearer to your Saviour and into a deeper union with Him to whom they point you.

– From *The Blood Of The Cross* by Andrew Murray.

Phoca PDF