

What Believers Think of Christ's Blood

Dr. Horatius Bonar (1808 – 1889)

To one who has no consciousness of guilt burdening him – no distraction of soul nor misgivings of conscience as to his standing in the sight of God, the blood must appear as unnatural as unnecessary; but to one whose conscience is awake, whose indifference about sin is gone, who has known what it is to groan by reason of the “body of death” – the blood is the very thing that he feels his need of, to pacify conscience and to bring him to God as one from whom, in believing, the wrath due to his iniquities has passed away forever (Col. 1:20 – 22).

He has seen sin in the light in which God sees it; but he has also seen the blood in that same light also. He has looked at the blood from the point at which God looks at it, and his soul has rested from its conflicts and its fears. Hitherto he had looked at it from a position of his own, and through a medium of his own colouring, but the Holy Spirit has removed him from the false colouring with which he was surrounded into that transparent atmosphere in which all things are seen as they are.

The estimate which in other days he had formed of the blood is now seen not only as inadequate, but false. It was that false estimate that so long stood between him and peace, and it is the remains of that false estimate still cleaving to him that at times rise up to darken or trouble his spirit. But that estimate is no longer his. He has been taught another by the Spirit of truth. This new estimate is that of God. It is founded upon the price which the Father puts upon the blood of the beloved Son.

In believing, the sinner relinquishes his own estimate and adopts that of God. In so doing he finds peace. The blood is his peace. How?

1. Because he sees it to be divine. It is the blood of God (Acts 20:28). Creature-blood could avail nothing. It could not reach high enough; it could not go low enough for his want and guilt. The blood is the life; 1 and no life save that which is divine – no life save that of the Prince of life could answer for his. There must be some sort of equivalent; and that equivalent God alone could furnish. And He has furnished it by sending His own Son, and so substituting a divine life instead of a human life, a divine death as the payment in full of that eternal death which was the sinning creature's portion. The sight of this divine bloodshedding – this infinite payment – is peace to his soul.

2. Because he sees it to be so precious. It is not only divinely perfect but divinely precious. No limit can be set upon its value. The question which a troubled spirit puts is, Is this blood, this life, valuable enough to stand instead of mine? If it be so, and if God be willing to accept the exchange. Nay, it was He who first proposed it; it is He who is pressing this exchange upon your notice and entreating you to receive it, that so there may be nothing left for you to pay. In believing, we consent to take God's payment, which we learn to be so infinite in value; and, in taking it, we are set free from the durance which was our portion, till that payment should be wholly made. And this is peace!

3. Because he sees it to be suitable. It provides for the very things he needs. It meets every part of his varied case, leaving nothing unprovided for which could burden, or alarm, or disquiet him. Every question that a guilty conscience can put it, it fully answers. It is not a mere general remedy which we must contrive to make to suit our case as well as we can. It is a special remedy which adapts itself to every individual case, just as if provided for it alone. No fear can arise, for which it does not furnish an antidote. No doubt can agitate the soul, which it is not fitted to soothe and lay to rest. No question can be asked, to which it does not most promptly reply. And this is peace!

4. Because he sees it to be so spotless. It is “the blood of the lamb without blemish and without spot.” This attracts his eye.

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 (Leviticus 17:11).

There are many things attractive about the blood, but this is one of the most attractive. There is not one stain upon it. It is infinitely pure. Had there been one stain upon it, his peace would have been imperfect. But its purity is so manifest and so divine, that he feels the absolute security of the foundation on which his peace is built. It is the blood of a sacrifice in which even the eye of Jehovah could detect no flaw.

5. Because he sees it to be so unchangeable. It loses none of its efficacy by time or repetition. It is the same in this age as when it was shed at first. It is the same today as when first we applied to it for healing and for cleansing. Nothing can rob it of its potency. It has cleansed millions; it can cleanse millions more; it has washed out stains, in number past calculation, in dye most thoroughly crimson. Yet it is unpolluted. It has taken on no stain. It is still as able to pacify the conscience and to release the soul from guilt. All along it has spoken “better things than that of Abel”; and to this day it still speaks the same. As the atmosphere that girds our earth remains untainted in spite of the millions that breathe it – as fit to nourish life, and to transmit the sunbeam as at first – so this blood of God’s own Son abides unstained by the myriad of sins that it has purged away – as fit as ever to cleanse, to heal, to gladden, and to transmit the sunshine of Jehovah’s reconciliation into any eye that will but open to let it enter.

Of all this he sees that there is abundant evidence, evidence which completely satisfies him, and makes him feel that in trusting in that blood, he is trusting to one of the surest things in the universe. He hears the voice of God, from the beginning proclaiming its power and its purity. He sees the finger of God pointing forward to the one sacrifice in which no flaw could be found. He listens to the testimony of “the law and the prophets” on this point, and finds how

entire is their concurrence. He sees Satan doing his utmost to discover some imperfection in his victim, but finding “nothing in Him” (Luke 23:47). He sees too in the resurrection of the crucified One, one of the most decisive of all the testimonies. It was “through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” so that He was “brought again from the dead by the Father” (Heb. 13:20). The sin that was laid upon Him had slain Him and borne Him down to the grave; but in so doing, it had shed that blood that taketh sin away; so that it was not possible He could be holden in the chains of death. The blood had satisfied, and having been accepted as payment in full, He was raised forthwith out of that very tomb into which He had gone down under the weight of our guilt. The blood was thus proved to be sufficient to atone for that guilt which was laid upon Him – and in this blessed proof the believing soul rests. He hears too the songs which are sung in heaven respecting this blood; and sees the delight there felt in Jesus as “the Lamb that was slain” (Revelation 5:9, 12). And that in which the saints above rejoice, is surely what he may safely rejoice in here. They cannot be mistaken in their estimate of the blood. They cannot err in their praises of the blood. They must know what they are doing when delighting in the Lamb that was slain.

What more then can he need as evidence of the preciousness, the efficacy, the spotlessness, the sufficiency of this blood, to which he has come, and on which he is resting? It has been proved in every way and found sufficient. It was enough for the saints in other days, it is enough for them now. It is enough for the saints above, it may well be enough for the saints' experiences, as resulting from this blood. They are such as the following:

1. Through it he has the remission of sin. He remembers how it is written, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). He remembers also how Jesus Himself said, “This is my blood of the new covenant shed for many, for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Keeping his eye fixed upon the blood, he realizes every moment the forgiveness which it proclaims, and the blessedness of which that forgiveness is the source. And if at any time a doubt disquiet him, he looks anew to the blood and is reassured.

It was thus that a minister of the last century wrote to a friend on a deathbed, “Your being kept in the faith of the righteousness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and preserved from falling in the last trial, must be entirely owing to grace helping in that very time of need, even the free grace that is in Christ Jesus sufficient for you, and showing itself perfect in your weakness. This needs no merit nor effort of yours, to make it effectual; you are not weak enough to be helped by it, if you think to assist it in the least, either by the least doing, or remotest willing to do, yet it must both show your utter weakness and infirmities, and show itself sufficient to make you strong in weakness. The boundless merit of the blood of God needs not the least grain of weight from you added to it, to make it outweigh the demerit of all your heinous sins, with all their aggravations, or to make it sufficient to keep you from being found wanting when weighed in God’s balance. It scorns the least offer of assistance from the sinner to make him perfectly just in the sight of God. And if you believe it to be the blood of the Son of God that is exhibited to you in the divine testimony, you cannot suspect that you lack anything to make you inherit eternal life. If you have but dark views of the reconciled face of God, this must be because you see as through a glass darkly the merit of the reconciling blood, but when you once have ceased to walk by faith, being present with the Lord, and seeing Him as He is, alive from the dead by His own blood, the brightest light of the Father’s face that shines on Him will fill your soul.”

2. Through it he is brought nigh and kept nigh to God. For thus it is written, “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). In coming nigh at first, he came with that blood as his only introduction: and, in continuing nigh, he feels the necessity of always realizing the efficacy of the blood. It was this that enabled him to draw near “with a true heart and in full assurance of faith,” and it is this that keeps him in the same posture still. It is this that makes him feel safe in the presence of the Holy One, safe in dealing with Him about his sins, safe in dwelling always in the secret place of the Most High.

3. Through it he is put in possession of eternal life. The blood is his security, as well as the ground of his claim. “The blood is the life,” and the life of another having been taking instead of his, death is no longer his portion, but life – “whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood

hath eternal life” (John 6:54). In recognizing the efficacy of the blood, and in consenting to take his stand before God upon it alone, he drinks it, and in drinking it he receives the earnest of the everlasting life of which in believing He has become the heir.

4. Through it his conscience is purged. “If the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:13-14; 1 John 1:7). Though a sinner, he is entitled to plead “not guilty” by reason of his connection with this blood. To do anything else would be to deny the full efficacy of the blood. Though in himself guilty, his conscience is as completely set at rest from the accusing terrors of remorse, as if he had never transgressed the law. He finds that “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth him from all sin”; not “hath cleansed” but “cleanseth” – is always doing it, hour after hour. The stream is ever flowing over him, and ever carrying off the iniquity that is oozing out at every pore.

5. Through it he is set apart for God. By it he has been bought, and by it he has been separated from a present evil world. Hence he can join in that song, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us unto our God kings and priests” (Revelation 1:6). By this blood he has been ransomed, and this of itself sets him apart. But the mark of the blood is upon him. He has become a consecrated vessel – a vessel of the sanctuary – no longer for the use of self or of the world, but for the use of God alone. As one on whom the blood has been sprinkled, he feels that he dares not be another’s; he must be Christ’s alone. He dare not turn the sanctuary of Jehovah into the temple of idols, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost into the abode of devils.

6. Through it all holiness comes. The blood has opened the channel, and holiness flows in. He dares not use this blood for unholy purposes. He dares not say, “I am sprinkled with the blood, therefore I make light of sin, I may live as I please.” No: he says “I am sprinkled with the blood, therefore I must be holy. They who know it not may live on in sin; but I who know it, dare not. Others, who reject it, may reason in such a way; but I cannot.” The blood is too precious, too

holy, to be used for any but holy purposes. If he were attempting to use it for any other, it would immediately change his voice and bear witness against him.

7. Through it he overcomes. “They overcame him by the blood of the lamb” (Revelation 12:11). It is the sight of this blood that nerves him for the conflict, and gives him the assurance of victory. He, whose blood it is, was the conqueror, and in his name we move forwards to battle, certain of being more than conquerors through him that loved us. The blood with which we are sprinkled gives us both strength and courage. With this we are invincible – nay, victorious.

8. Through it his garments are purified. Of the blessed above it is written, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb” (Revelation 7:14). It is that so thoroughly purifies our raiment, making it, for beauty and for glory, to resemble that of our great High Priest himself. Not one stain of earth is permitted to defile it. And thus clothed, we are not only made fit for having fellowship with God, but for standing “before his throne”, for “serving him day and night in his temple.” The brightness of angelica raiment cannot equal ours, for it is divine. We can take our place amid angels, yet never blush. We can compare our robes with theirs, yet feel no shame. So perfect, so resplendent have they been made by this blood of the lamb.

9. Through it all blessing flows. The “good things to come”, spoken of by the apostle (Hebrews 10:1), are all connected with this blood. It is the blood that makes it befitting in God to bestow these blessings, and which emboldens the sinner to draw near to receive them. All that is excellent and glorious is connected with this blood. This is the river that bears to him all blessings on its crimson stream, pouring in without ceasing everything that God has to confer. “Of what use is this fountain to believers?”, asks William Romaine, an old writer. “Many and great; all their graces flow from it; all their duties are to be washed in it; all their comforts are maintained by it.”

Thus it is that the saint rejoices in this blood. It was the knowledge of it that first shed peace into his soul, and it is the same knowledge that maintains, throughout life, that peace which

then began. It was in being led by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of this blood that he became a saint, and it is in continuing to know it that he continues a saint. His only answer to the whispers of conscience is, “the blood that was shed.” His great preparation for the duties of each day is a fresh application to the blood, in which he bathes his conscience anew each morning as he rises.

10. Through it heaven is reached at last. “Let this be our daily work and service, for we are daily contracting new filth. Yesterday’s cleansing will not save us from new filth today; nor will our running to the fountain today, serve to take away new spots tomorrow; new spots call for new washing, so that this must be our very life and exercise, to be daily and continually running to the fountain with our souls, and giving Christ, the great purger, much to do.

“We must not think to be perfectly washed, so long as we are here; for we will be contracting new filth daily, and our feet will need daily to be washed (John 13:10). We will not be without spot or wrinkle, till we come home to that place, where enterest nothing that defileth.” (John Brown of Wamphray)