

Because of the Blood of the Lamb

by T. Austin-Sparks



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(A Message as Spoken)

Reading: Zechariah 3:1-10

"And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, 'The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him.' And unto him he said, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' And I said, 'Let them set a fair mitre upon his head.' So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 'Thus saith the LORD of hosts; "If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the highpriest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof," saith the LORD of hosts, "and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day," saith the LORD of hosts, "shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree."'"

Revelation 12:1-12

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast

them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.' And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death." (R.V.)

One clause of that verse sums up everything else and is sufficient - "because of the blood of the Lamb."

1. The Travail for the Man-Child

Now first of all, beloved, I want to gather together several things which I believe represent the significance of that statement, that to which the statement belongs. I am one of those who believe (I do not ask you to believe it because I do, but that you will go to the Lord with open hearts about it) that the man-child of this chapter represents a company of the Lord's people at the end-time who, in a peculiar way, stand in the fullness of the virtue and power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus; and, as we have often said, we believe that it is that people, that company, the man-child, that God in a special way is seeking to secure for Himself at this time; the thing which, in the midst of other things, He is peculiarly, particularly concerned to bring into being. It is a company called into a peculiar relationship to the Lord Himself for the fulfilment of a priestly ministry in relation to the universal kingdom of our God and His Christ - and I use the word "universal" there with care; not just an earthly aspect of that kingdom, but also the heavenly aspect. We must understand that there are two sides to the kingdom; there is the earthly side and there is the heavenly side. There will be those who are in the earthly side who will not be in the heavenly side, but there will not be any in the heavenly side who are not in the earthly side. Get the heavenly side and you get both. This particular company, the man-child company, is, in the purpose of God, to be brought into relation to Him for the fulfilment of a priestly ministry in relation to the universal kingdom of our God and His Christ; a priestly ministry, in relation to the kingdom and the throne, the universal sovereignty of the Lord Jesus; an administrative instrument in heaven, to rule with Him, from the heavens, the whole range of His dominion.

Let us call to mind an Old Testament illustration of this in the person of Samuel. You will remember that the birth of Samuel was impossible of realisation along the ordinary line of nature, but his mother Hannah entered into a spiritual travail concerning him. While in that spiritual travail, while before the Lord in strong crying and tears for this man-child, the other wife of her husband laughed at her, sneered at her, looked down upon her. She had children, Hannah had none, and was despised; and then by a special intervention and act of God that spiritual travail was answered and Samuel was born. Born, on the one hand, out of travail in her soul, on the other hand, born out of a direct act of God in His Divine intervention when man was helpless, and nature was impotent. When Samuel was weaned

he was presented in the Temple and we read that "Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod," - the priest's garment. You see the stages; he - you might say from birth, from infancy, without a lapse of years - immediately came into a priestly office. He was designed for that, brought into being for that, the travail was unto that. We have noticed that it says of Hannah, that she weaned the child. Speaking of Sarah and Isaac it says "when the child was weaned" - taking its course. Hannah did it as quickly as she could, it did not take its course, she did it to get him into this priestly ministry as soon as could be. So that his very life from its beginning was marked by this priestly ministry, and it was in relation to the throne and the kingdom - Samuel was the king-anointer, Samuel brought in the great king. His priestly ministry was in relation to the kingdom. He was the embodiment of that great phrase "kingdom and priests unto God."

Here is your type, a man-child. We have often said that women in the Bible represent spiritual principles, and Hannah represents the spiritual law of travail unto the specific purpose of God, and when you come to Revelation 12, you have a woman into whom there enters a spirit of travail; a spirit of travail comes in, as I believe, unto the bringing forth of this specific company, this remnant company, the man-child born out of that spirit of travail, that crying-out spirit, that anguish. Against that company the Adversary is set, deadly set. Zech. 3 which we have read introduces these principles again in another historic setting. Joshua the high-priest is in person the embodiment of the priestly ministry of all Israel, that which is to be a "kingdom and priests unto God"; the high-priest simply gathers up the whole priestly nation in his person, and Joshua is there seen as the figure-head of the priesthood in relation to the kingdom. The priesthood, the priestly ministry, the priestly vocation and calling, is in a sorry state in Zechariah's day. You see Joshua clothed in filthy garments. That is the condition of things, and Satan - the Adversary - is seen standing at his right hand to be his adversary. The right hand is the place of power, and Satan is in the place of power because of the filthy garments, and accuses Joshua before God. We will come to that again later - Satan in the place of power as an accuser of that which is meant to fulfil this priestly ministry in relation to the kingdom. Bringing these things together you are getting the background of spiritual principles, and you are seeing exactly what is in view in this chapter in Revelation. "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb."

2. The Power of the Blood is Primarily in its Incorruptibility

What is the ground of victory? What is the basis of that ultimate triumph? By what means will God get His end? It says here "because of the blood of the Lamb." That, first of all, and I believe more than anything else, relates to the nature of the Blood of the Lord Jesus. I mean the absolute sinlessness of the Lord Jesus in His essential life, in His essential nature; His absolute sinlessness: that His nature was altogether devoid of the slightest suspicion of corruption, of sin, of defilement, of corruptibility. That is its strength; that is its power; that is its victory. Before you can understand the working of the power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus you have to understand the absolute immunity from any suggestion of sin in the nature of the Lord Jesus. Sin was not found in Him. He was the "Lamb without blemish and without spot," and *although He was born of a virgin, of a woman who was a member of Adam's race, by the direct activity and operation of the Holy Spirit there was a complete cutting in between Mary as a member of Adam's race and the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, so that He inherited none of the sin of Adam's race by His birth.*

It is important to see that. He was born of a member of Adam's race and yet inherited none of its sin in His nature, because of a cutting in of the Holy Ghost, so that it could be said of Him as of no other being ever in this universe, "that holy thing." Essentially, in very substance, He was holy, and His Blood represents His nature, His life without corruption, without sin, without taint of any kind, absolutely sinless and, therefore, Satan has no power over Him; "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."

Because of this He can cast out the prince of this world, and can make a show of him openly, triumphing over him in His Cross. He can vanquish Satan, He can meet sin and deal with it in the mastery of it because it has no ground in Him of crippling and weakening. See Joshua in his place of weakness, a place of impotence, a place where he is not functioning in his holy calling, in a place of defeat, and the Adversary in the place of power, at his right hand to be his adversary! He cannot help himself because of his filthy garments, and before Joshua can ever be established in the place of power, and given ascendancy, before Satan as the accuser can be cast down, these filthy garments have to be removed. In principle and effect the Blood has to take effect. The Blood, the precious sinless Blood, has to come in and deal with sin, the power and ground of satanic activity - the means of accusation on the part of the Adversary. Before that can be destroyed the Blood has to be operative.

3. The "Overcomer" Stands on the Ground of the Perfections of Christ, and Meets the "Accuser" by Faith's Appropriation Thereof

What is the meaning of the Blood being applied? It is that which is the absolute sinlessness of the Lord Jesus being the ground upon which we stand. That gives us authority, gives us power. It is the essential perfection of Christ as being the ground of our confidence, our faith, our trust and our testimony. If we stand in ourselves we are defeated. There are no perfections in us, there is nothing in us whatever that can bring Satan to naught and deliver us from his accusations and from his position of power over us. But when we stand in Christ, in all the perfection of His nature, of His being, in the absolute sinlessness of Christ represented in that incorruptible Blood, there is deliverance. And so that Blood poured out becomes active, operative, in motion, and it is a great thing to have the perfections of the Lord in motion on our behalf, flowing, active to meet all the accusations of the enemy.

"The accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night." Why? Because they are not standing now on the ground of their own imperfection and sinfulness and weakness and faultiness, but they are now standing on the ground of His absolute perfection, and bearing testimony thereto: "The word of their testimony." "They overcame because of the blood." It is a question of a ground of absolute holiness, absolute holiness not in ourselves but in Him, and our appropriating by faith and apprehending by faith all that the Lord Jesus is in His essential being as the spotless Lamb of God for us to God, from God to us. We can never reiterate that note too often. That is the ground of victory. Give the enemy one little fragment of old Adam, of the flesh, of self, of sin, and he immediately takes the place of power and immediately brings you under accusation and begins to weaken both life and ministry. You know this is true; if you do not you will find it out. But stand continuously in the efficacy of that Blood, stand continuously in your receiving by faith of all that the Lord Jesus is made unto you from God, clear up everything concerning which the Holy Spirit speaks in conviction, clear it up in virtue of that Blood, and the enemy is ruled out, he is not in the place of power.

4. Satanic Tyranny Through Self-Occupation Broken by a Right Apprehension of the Blood

Oh! if the Lord's people could get this in their hearts. There are so many of the Lord's people today over whom Satan is lording it; lording it along the line of accusation, bringing them under a sense of condemnation and judgment, robbing them of their peace, of their assurance, rest, hope; and you will find these people are everlastingly talking about their own short-comings, their sinfulness; they are for ever circling round themselves, all that they are that they would not be, all that they are not that they would be. Their deliverance from Satan is that they should have a fresh apprehension of the absolute satisfaction of the Father in His Son on their behalf, and that they find their standing before the Father in acceptance. That is the way of deliverance, the way of the Adversary's casting out. This is the way of overcoming him as the Accuser.

Yes, the ground of the Blood is sufficient for this full-orbed, many-sided, all-round victory. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb," and the first and supreme factor in the virtue of that Blood in all these directions, is its untainted sinlessness, the nature of the Lord Jesus. There has never been another who was such. Oh, I am so glad that it was God that came in Christ, GOD that came in Christ. Can you charge God with sin? Can you lay sin to God's charge, to God's account? It was God in Christ, the absolutely and altogether holy One in whom there was no sin, who came in incarnation; and in virtue of that Divine nature in its perfection Satan in his authority is defeated - on that ground. Blessed be God! We receive by faith the virtue of that precious Blood; that is, the perfection of the Lord Jesus can be put to our account. That is grace - the wonder of the Gospel. If we were to begin to analyse ourselves and take stock of ourselves, that would be a terrible business, a wretched business, and it would be endless - think of it, beloved, with all that we know of ourselves, all that God knows about us - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart. I try the reins..."

Though all that be a fact, you and I can stand now in the presence of God as sinlessly perfect, not in ourselves, but in Christ, as having absolute sinless perfection put to our account by God. Understand I am not confusing things, I am not saying that any of us ever becomes sinlessly perfect in ourselves here, but those perfections of the Lord Jesus are put to our account before God to satisfy His requirements, to provide the ground where Satan no longer has authority. The defeat of Satan and the victory of the saints is not by their effort, their straining, their groaning, nor by anything they can do; it is the measure of their faith's appropriation of the absolute perfection of Christ for them as a living, working thing of God on their behalf. It is a great thing to be in Christ Jesus.

5. The Blood Represents Total Separation to God

The second thing, bound up with the first as to the meaning of the Blood, is absolute separation unto God, and that voluntarily; wholly, utterly separated and abandoned to God. There was not at any point in His person a deviation. He was whole. He was one. You cannot find mixture. You never find wool and cotton in His spiritual garments. You never find in Him the counterpart of those things forbidden in the Old Testament as typical of contradictions and deviations and things which do not harmonise. He was one, mind and heart and will, without the slightest reservation, and wholly for God. That was His nature, and that has its very seat in His Blood. His Blood represents that - a life which is sinless, and wholly and utterly given over to God without the slightest deviation in thought or desire, inclination, will. The Blood speaks of that, beloved, absolute separation unto God. Go back to the Old Testament for illustration.

In the Book of Joshua, chapter 5, you have the people coming to Gilgal where the Lord, through Joshua, ordered the complete circumcising of Israel. All the males that had been born in the wilderness were circumcised at Gilgal and the Lord's word was this: "This day (when it was done) have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt... wherefore the name of that place was called Gilgal," which is "rolling." "The Lord hath rolled away the reproach of Egypt" - on the day of the circumcising, in the day of that symbolic act in the shedding and encircling of the precious Blood - the whole body of the flesh cut off - so Paul explains it in Col. 2, "the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ." The reproach of Egypt rolls away when that happens. What is "the reproach of Egypt?" What is the meaning of that? I wonder if you have noticed the persistent following of Egypt on the heels of Israel all the days of the wilderness. I do not mean literally, I mean spiritually. They were constantly looking back to Egypt. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Even when Moses went up into the mount and Aaron made the calf and they danced to the calf and worshipped it, it was Egypt brought out in representation. What is it that Stephen tells us about it - I think he sums it all up in a word in Acts 7:39: "... and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt."

Their hearts were in Egypt, and it was because their hearts were more than half in Egypt all the forty years, that there is such a sorry story; up and down; one day brighter, and the next day murmuring and complaining again. What a story it is. Whenever, you read the account it seems that the bright patches are almost overlooked and the dark thing is kept in view. It is referred to in the New Testament. Paul writes to the Hebrews about it - their "carcasses fell in the wilderness," reminding them of the day of provocation in the wilderness when "your fathers tempted me..."; always coming back to this wretched failure. Why did they fail? Because their hearts were not wholly out of Egypt; because they had not recognised sufficiently nor apprehended adequately the meaning of the type of that precious Blood of the Lamb that was slain.

It was not until they came into the land, through the Jordan (which is typically what Christ has done for them in His Cross) to Gilgal (the place of circumcision where the thing is made real in them, - that which was "for" is now made "in"), not until they reach the place of cutting (that Cross entering into their flesh, "the cutting off of the whole body of the flesh" symbolically), that the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. What is the reproach of Egypt? The prophet Zephaniah says, "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon..." - what are they doing? They are looking down upon the Lord's people, despising them because of their weakness, because they are not getting through to their goal, because from their standpoint, as they judge things, the whole thing is a fiasco - "You left Egypt to get to Canaan and you have been forty years at it!" Weakness, failure of realisation, helplessness and the enemy in the place of strength! Reproach is upon them because they had not recognised that the Blood fundamentally meant an utter cutting off from Egypt; whole-hearted and complete abandonment to God; standing over on God's side with God, not standing over on this side questioning God, but, on God's side with Him. When you get there, in the full meaning of the Cross - a total cutting off from Egypt; a total cutting off from the fleshly will, the fleshly mind, the fleshly heart, and you are with God wholly - then there is victory; until you get there Satan is in the place of power, but when you get there the reproach of Egypt is rolled away, you come into the land in the place of authority and go from strength to strength in ascendancy. It is so clear in the Old Testament illustration. That is Revelation 12:11 in principle. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death: Therefore rejoice, O heavens..."

6. The Paralysis of a Divided Heart

Now, beloved, the trouble with a good many of us has been this divided heart. We are not sure, not absolutely sure about the Lord, about our own position, about the testimony that we are perhaps standing for and talking about; we are not sure about it, we have secret questionings. It does not matter what we say in public and to others about it, God knows the secret of our hearts, whether we are absolutely true in secret with Him over this matter; and there is no way of victory, no way to ascendancy, no way through to the realisation of the Divine end - a people to fulfil a priestly ministry in the universal sovereignty and kingdom of our God and His Christ - until we are on the ground of an absolute undividedness of heart for God in the matter of His testimony.

The challenge to our hearts is, Are we utterly in or are we only partly in; half in; three-quarters in? Is there some lurking fascination of Egypt? How Egypt had fascinated and held part of their hearts when they were in the wilderness! Out here everything is uncertain; we never know from one day to another whether we are going to have our food! In Egypt there was at least certainty; we did know what our programme was; we were sure that things would be pretty substantial, that while we had our work we got our food! Out here you are forced to depend upon God, and that is a precarious business. Is it? God is more certain than Egypt. There are Christians who feel that this walk of faith is such an uncertain thing. You do not know what the Lord is going to bring you into next, what is going to happen to

you. In the world you at least have solid ground under your feet. This flesh wants a basis of evidence for itself; solid earth. This heavenly life - you never know - ah! but do you know the Heavenly ONE?

Let me ask you - Do you believe, beloved, that when, having committed yourself to God, having been consecrated to the Lord, having had an understanding with the Lord, and having been obedient to Him up to all the light He has given you, do you believe that when you get to the glory you will be able to say to the Lord: You let me be deceived, my life has been ruined, I have gone wrong? Is that possible? I do not believe it! I believe that whatever the Accuser may try to bring upon us, and whatever others may say about us, if before God in the secret we are honest with Him, if we are cut off by the precious Blood from our own will, our own way, our own schemes, our life interest, and are putting our trust in Him and following the light that He gives, I believe that when we get there, beloved, we shall not have been deceived, but we shall have to say: Lord, You were good to our trust and You led us by a right way that we might come to a city of habitation! The Lord will accept a charge on His honour when we are cut off from ourselves and from all personal and worldly interests, and are wholly for Him.

7. Losing the Crown

Egypt for some is the ground of bondage and defeat. Even though we may be the Lord's children, may be Blood-bought, may have come out on redemption ground, yet we may be defeated because of an inadequate apprehension of the meaning of that precious Blood. I believe that there will be many who will lose that thing that God has in view as a special vocation in His heavenly kingdom, because they are not wholly devoted to God now. I do not believe that we will be brought into that willy-nilly. If you want the world, even as a believer, want a little of it - well, you may have it at this cost, the loss of that for which God has preeminently called you, the heavenly kingdom in a marvellous vocation, you will lose that.

Paul was after that. Paul strained every nerve, spiritually, for that; left the things which were behind for that, to be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom. There are many Christians who will lose that because they do not go all the way with the Lord; not lose their salvation, but that specific vocation in glory and honour; they will lose it because they did not recognise and honour the full virtue of the Blood in the totality of their consecration and abandonment to the Lord. Yes, in that sense they will be left behind. But those who go through, who overcome in trial, are they that overcome because of the Blood of the Lamb in this second meaning, the absolute abandonment of the Lord Jesus to the will of His Father even unto death; who are standing in the virtue of His consecration, and making their consecration, by His grace, as utter as was His. We shall never have to let go what He let go in His obedience to the will of God. We have not got it to let go, but what the Lord is looking for, beloved, is a people who are with Him completely, with undivided heart, and that is the ground of our victory and of Satan's defeat.

Now I think I must close there for the present. Oh, let it be seen that the Blood of the Lamb in its absolute perfection of holiness and sinlessness as representing His being, His substance, His essence, His nature and His complete surrender, His capitulation to the will of His Father, is the ground to stand on; something to be appropriated by faith and held on to. More, it is something to be taken up as a weapon against the enemy.

8. The Blood is a Weapon to be Wielded

The Dragon is the adversary. We are up against the Devourer. All truly spiritual people know that today; some more than others, perhaps. If he can swallow us up, he will. I believe he is out to strike us with death if he can, to strike our bodies with death, to strike our souls with death. Let me say this word to those who are more intimately associated with

things, that the more we come to stand in relation to the Lord concerning the heavenly kingdom and that priestly ministry in the heavenly kingdom in relation to the throne, the more shall we be aware of the immediate proximity of the Dragon, of him who would strike with death, strike our minds with death, strike these bodies with death. That will explain a good deal for some. The nearer we get to the vocation of the man-child, the closer we come to the Dragon, the more shall we be conscious of the encompassing and encircling of death, and shall cry to get out of it, and say, This is not life, it is death! Are we going to accept it? It is death; but where is the virtue of the Blood? Do we refuse it on the ground of that mighty shed Blood? "They overcame him because of the blood..." and we are not going to accept death, because of that Blood.

Perhaps some might misunderstand that. We are not saying that we are not going to the grave if the Lord tarries long; but that is not accepting death. We can die, and go to the grave in the physical sense, but that can be victory; not defeat, but triumph! We do not accept death. You may know it spiritually, you know it mentally, you know it round you and playing upon you when you come into close touch with that ultimate end of God in the testimony of Jesus Christ. Look after that explanation; hold on to it. It calls, beloved, for standing up against the adversary, the engulfer, the swallow-up. Blessed be God, there is going to be a greater swallow-up than he. Death is going to be swallowed up. There is one who will swallow up if he can. Against the Dragon, against the Adversary, against the Accuser, against the Deceiver, the Blood is adequate, sufficient; but there must be a positive, active appropriation of the full power and meaning of that Blood and a standing upon it; a taking of it up as an active instrument. Oh! to get a company like that here and now who know and appropriate the power of the Blood; not in the strength of the flesh, but emptied of self, and in all humility, nothingness, weakness, standing in HIS virtue, the power of His Blood, and standing up and using that mighty weapon against the operation of death now, all round, to get through to that end which God has in view. That is what is needed now, a people like that.

May the Lord bring this home to our heart, that this may not be an address but an appeal, an urge of the Spirit of Christ - bringing us into that thing actively by prayer. Remember your ground, remember your weapon, remember that all the emptying of self, the weakening, the bringing down, the chastening, the discipline, is to bring you to an effective place. Pride has no standing here; self-sufficiency has no standing here; self-strength comes not into this; naught but the precious Blood.

Weakness is not helplessness. Helplessness on our part is not despair. No, it is the open way for the mighty efficacy of the Blood to come into operation.

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