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The Testimony of the Blood

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"And the Lord said to the serpent... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: He shall bruise thy head..." (Genesis 3:15).

"... the old serpent... 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" (Revelation 12:9,11).

The Testimony of Jesus is first mentioned in the Scripture by the Lord Himself in the above words (Genesis 3:15). It is all gathered up in that one clause: "He shall bruise thy head". The two things combine in that clause: "He", the Person, and "shall bruise thy head", the work; and that with a certain special significance: "thy head", which is 'thy dominion, thy government, thy sovereignty, thy crown'. Then we have the Cross introduced immediately as the scene and centre of the establishing fully and finally in Him of this Testimony, the central element of the Cross being the Blood of the Lord Jesus. The Blood; that is the central factor in the Testimony of Jesus - the Blood of the Lord Jesus. I want to remind you of the inclusiveness of the Blood of the Lord Jesus, that in the first place it has to do with sin. It is immediately related in that passage in Genesis to what had taken place and to what had entered into the world. Sin, and sin in all its aspects; sin as transgression, overstepping the mark; sin as lawlessness, revolt against God; sin as shortcoming, coming short of the Glory of God; sin in every form in every way. The Blood of the Lord Jesus has to do with sin in the meeting of it, the destroying of it, and ultimately in the wiping of it from the universe. The Blood of Jesus Christ is directed against sin.

Then, in the second place, it is related to all that is meant by that symbolic word: "the flesh". And the flesh here does not mean merely the principle of sin, but it means the kind of person man is when he has fallen into sin. That is, the fallen race, the species which came into existence when sin entered in - an entirely different type of being from that intended by God. "He is become flesh" (Genesis 6:3). The Blood of Jesus Christ has to do, not only with the sin as the principle and the law of the fallen race, but with the race itself; not only to wipe sin from the universe, but to wipe that race from the universe; to put away that kind and type of man and make possible and secure a new creation, a man, not after the flesh type, but the Man after the Spirit type, such as Christ in resurrection.

The Blood, in the third place, is related to the consequences immediately following upon sin and the race becoming what it did when sin entered. That is death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "And," says the Spirit through Paul "as by one man's disobedience... death passed upon all for that all have sinned", and death is the universal and immediate consequence upon sin and the sentence concerning the race. Death in all its range and depth; death in every realm, spirit, soul and body. The Blood testifies concerning death and has a work to do in that realm.

Then, in the fourth place, the Blood of Jesus Christ not only deals with the consequence and the fruit, but with the cause and the root, and Satan himself is involved in this mighty issue in the Blood of Jesus Christ. He is taken up in the Testimony of Jesus, and taken up in two capacities:

Firstly, he is taken up as "the prince of this world" - "The prince of this world cometh"; "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out".

Secondly, to Satan as "him that had the power of death, that is the devil". It is not only the death, but him that had the power of death, and the word "power" there is neither the familiar word: "dunamis" - force, nor: "exousia" - authority, but it is the other word: "kratos", which means 'to hold'. It is the grip of death; the one who holds in his hands death, the one who has the hold of death; and in that connection the Blood speaks concerning him, that through death - and the Lord Jesus getting for a moment into the hold, the grip of death - He should destroy him that had the hold of death, that is the devil.

So the Blood deals with him in both those capacities. That is the Testimony of Jesus as in the Blood of the Lord Jesus.

The Issue is that of Life and Death

Now we see that the main issue in the Testimony of Jesus, in and through and by His Blood, is the issue of life and death, or death and life. That is the main issue. Oh, do follow me closely, for you will see in a moment some of the great content of this thing. The main issue in the Testimony of Jesus as by the Blood of Jesus is the issue of LIFE AND DEATH. If the Lord's people recognized that enough, they would have their ground set and fixed, they would know exactly what their business is in the world, and they would have a full explanation of all that which they meet in the spiritual realm when they become related to the Testimony of Jesus. IT IS THE ISSUE OF LIFE AND DEATH. It is not only of sin and sanctification, and it is not only the issue of an old man and a new man, but in all that, and over all that, and around all that is the far bigger issue, the issue of life and death. And until this main issue is recognised the whole question of sin, and of the new man, and the new race, and the

bringing in of the new creation, and of the escape of men and women from the power of Satan unto God could never be. You will be held up until you recognise the main issue. Where does the whole question of sanctification begin? Where does the whole question of a new creation begin? Where does the whole question of the emancipation of souls from the grip of Satan begin? It all begins at the place where the power of death is met. It is not sins with which you and I are contending, nor merely with the old creation. We can be locked up and bound and tied by the absorption and obsession with our old man and never get anywhere. We can be locked up and tied hand and foot with all kinds of truth and teaching about sanctification, the question of sins or sin specifically, and get nowhere because we are not recognising the main issue. The main issue is death, the power of death, and we have got to come to that central issue of the Blood of the Lord Jesus - the question of life and death. That is the Cross at its heart. Unless the Lord had settled that issue once and for all in His Blood in the Cross then all other matters would have failed entirely and there would have been no complete Gospel.

Then, that being the Cross and the content of the Cross, we see what the Testimony of Jesus is in essence. It is the Testimony to life, making possible a new creation. That Testimony, when it really is recognized at its centre, is a Testimony concerning life which is brought into being upon the basis of death being destroyed, death having its power broken, and him that had the power of death being nullified. When that Testimony comes into being, and it is recognized, and anyone enters into that Testimony and makes that their testimony, what happens? Immediately the murderer is brought out.

The Enemy of Life Comes Out

He who, as the Lord Himself said, was a "murderer from the beginning", always has acted in that capacity towards any who were called into the Testimony of Jesus, whether in the Old Testament or in the New.

Abel was the first to take up the Testimony in history. What was Abel's testimony? The Blood! Whether Abel understood all the content of that symbolic thing or not is not our concern for the moment, but God understood what it meant. He had established it, and it was His way through all history. That fragment in the Hebrew Letter has governed all sacrifice in the mind of God: "without shedding of blood there is no remission". The Blood was the key from the first movement of sin in this world in the mind of God, and Abel himself stepped into that Testimony of the Blood with all its significance concerning sin, death, the race, and him that had the power of death - and immediately the murderer came out and Abel was murdered, not *by* Cain, but *through* Cain; and so it has always been! When later Abram set up his altar and divided his sacrifice, the conflict commenced. You read about it in Genesis 15. The vultures descending, the beating off until the sun went down, the horror of great darkness - and then the coming through of the Lord. What is it linked with? It is linked with the revelation of the Lamb and the Blood of the Lamb by which his seed, after four hundred years in Egyptian bondage, was going to be emancipated. The Lord gave him the revelation of His method in the earth. What was that for? To get a people who should be *in* the nations *apart from* the nations, for the Testimony of Jehovah. Israel was to be God's corporate testimony in the earth, amongst the nations, and be constituted and sustained upon a principle of blood, the shed Blood. And when the Lord would come forth to reveal the nature of the Testimony in the earth as corporate in His people, Abram meets the impact of the horror of great darkness, and there is set up in the very atmosphere a state of conflict. You carry it on in the case of Moses himself: the conflict in Egypt, and the continual conflict through his life.

This is the explanation of the attack upon Elijah, when he had erected his altar and stood for the maintenance of the Testimony of the Lord in Israel. When he stood on Carmel for that Testimony by his altar, and that Testimony had been established and vindicated against the false prophets, nay, against all that produced the false prophets and their system - the power behind - THEN JEZEBEL THREATENS HIS LIFE. Satan anticipated Moses by the slaughter of all the innocents to get *one*, as he anticipated Calvary in the Lord Jesus by the slaughter of the innocents to get *One*. And here, in the case of Elijah, because he is standing for the Testimony in Israel, the best and most suited instrument to Satan, Jezebel, is taken up, and Elijah's life is threatened. This is the key to all those murderous attempts in the Old Testament upon individuals and upon companies of the Lord's people. It is the explanation of the Book of Esther, when Haman would have all the Jews massacred. Why? Because they were God's instruments in the earth. The devil is against the Testimony in that people; they are the target because they are the testimony. Stand in this true Testimony of the Lord Jesus, *in the power of the Holy Ghost* and not in the theory of the thing; stand in it truly, and as sure as anything is certain the enemy of life will come out, and that is the explanation of all your experience in the work of God, and in your own personal life, in body mind and spirit. I am saying one of the most tremendous and solemn, and yet one of the truest things when I say this.

The Testimony of Life Triumphant Over Death

Now we take up the whole thing when we take up a part, because there is no part. You are in it or you are out of it, and you cannot have a bit of it. Immediately, by faith and in the Holy Spirit, you become really, vitally related to the Testimony of Jesus, you are in that great issue, that supreme issue of the Blood - the conflict between life and death, death and life. You are in it, and in that realm there is only one thing, and that is

The Warring Faith of the Son of God.

There can be no passivity nor generalities in that realm. You cannot afford to take recreation in that realm. The praying has to be fighting prayer, and, oh, there is need for a revival of fighting prayer! The ceasing to say prayers, pray prayers, to take these jaunts in prayer all over the place, and come right to the mighty issues and battle through in the Name of the Lord. There needs to come more real fighting prayer into the Lord's people. You ask the Lord to give you the warring faith of the Son of God in prayer! It means that there has to be a very strong stand taken in that warring faith, and a refusal to be diverted by circumstances and appearances. Is the Testimony to you something which, if it were taken away and you have nothing left, *you* go with it, or is it something you have taken on and that you can change as you change your clothes? Will you be stripped of everything if that Testimony of the Lord Jesus is taken from you? If it is like that, you will say: 'Well, there is one thing which for me is a matter of life or death, and that is the Testimony in which I stand, the Testimony of the Lord Jesus.'

"And they overcame him because of the Blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." Does that sound like a contradiction? "Unto the death." Abel was killed. But "they" are not dead, and Abel is not dead. Paul, like Jesus, was slain. But they live in "the power of an endless life" because Jesus has conquered death and "him that had the hold on death". By His Cross and by His Blood He conquered!