Leviticus - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Blood., The

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“For 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.

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”—Heb. 9:22.

“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”—1 John 1:7.

WE should think much of the blood, it is our way of approach to God; a way is now open every moment into the Holiest of all. The guilty heart cannot approach God, it willingly sets up a fence. What removes it? The blood. Look at all the expenditure of His grace from first to last to bring us nigh. When the blood is rightly used and applied, what is the result? Nearness to God. Are you living in this nearness to God? If there be a question concerning guilt, there is a remedy—the blood; thus the heart gets confidence, and fear and disinclination are removed. People talk of knowing its power, but no man knows it aright who does not feel in the embrace of God. Whose blood is it? The blood of the Lord Jesus. He presents His own blood; He takes, as it were, the death which is past, and holds it up before God. He is the living Mediator, presenting the blood which He shed to redeem us to God. He knows our hearts, our sins, our weakness, our fearfulness, and He presents the blood to give us confidence and assurance.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Blood, The

“It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

The blood of Christ is the true ground of peace. When nothing else could save, God spared not His own Son. The death of Christ both satisfies the demands of law and justice, and saves the sinner that believes. It is only in the finished work of the cross that we see salvation for the lost. When Jesus shed His blood for the remission of sins, He glorified God, and opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.

Without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

Therefore it is written, that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

The salvation of sinners has always been connected with blood- shedding and death. The reason is obvious. Sin’s wages is death. The law of holiness and truth is, that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Death, then, is God’s just appointment to man, because he is a sinner. Man dies only because of sin. Death entered into the world by sin. The only way, therefore, of justly putting away sin was by death; and that no sinful man could die for the sin of another is clear, because he must die for himself. The Son of God, on whom death had no claim (because He knew no sin), was able to die for others. Nothing less than His death could save us, because we deserved death. Therefore, in matchless grace, Christ died for us — the just for the unjust.

Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3);

and as the life of the flesh is in the blood, so the shedding of blood is spoken of, in Scripture language, as the laying down of life. Hence we are told that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

The atoning blood God only provides. His love presents it to us; and the virtue of the blood is carefully recorded in the word of God from the earliest time of sin’s entrance into the world. No sooner had Adam sinned than he had an evil conscience, and got away from God. He tried all he could to cover his nakedness, and to hide himself from the presence of his Maker. But God searched him out, and, instead of condemning him, promised a Redeemer to deliver him by having his heel bruised; and showed him that He could clothe him and his wife, though sinners, with coats, and bring them into the place of life and blessing by sacrifice. Thus God taught our first parents, and thus they learned that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Abel is next presented to us in the Scripture, as offering unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. It was a life that he offered. He took of the firstlings of the flock. His sacrifice prefigured the blood-shedding and death of Jesus. Abel thus acknowledged that he was a sinner before God, justly exposed to death and judgment, but that he

rested only in the blood-shedding and death of the promised

Redeemer, and thus

obtained witness that he was righteous (Heb. 11:4).

In Noah’s time, we also see that the blessing of God came down upon the earth because of the sweet savour of the clean beasts, which the patriarch offered in sacrifice to Jehovah. Judgment had been poured out by the windows of heaven being opened, and the fountains of the great deep being broken up; but when the clean sacrifices were offered, we are told that

the Lord smelled a sweet savour

— a savour of rest;

and the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, &c. (Gen. 21, 22)

Thus showing us that God can only find rest, since sin entered the world, in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and that in this way only can He bless us. Here again we see the value of the blood.

The well-known story of the paschal lamb tells out also most strikingly, that there is safety only beneath the shelter of the blood. The sentence of judgment had gone forth upon Egypt. All the first- born were to be destroyed in one night. Neither rich nor poor, moral nor immoral, were excepted. God’s word had gone forth,

All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die (Ex. 11:5).

But was there no way of escape for any from such terrible judgments? Yes, there was a way, one way, one way only — the blood of the lamb. The children of Israel were told to take an unblemished lamb, kill it, and sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and doorposts of their houses; and God’s promise to such as thus used the blood was,

When I see the blood, I will pass over you (Ex. 12:13)!

And it came to pass that every house marked with the blood was passed over by the destroying angel, and every house that was not marked with blood He entered, and executed the threatened judgment; so that

there was not a house where there was not one dead (Ex. 12:30).

The difference consisted simply in the shelter of the blood. Not in their seeing the blood, but in God’s seeing it.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

Their safety was not in what they thought of the value of the blood, but in what God thought of it. The only question was, as to whether they, in the knowledge that judgment was coming, were under the shelter of the blood. It was not a question as to their being in a great house or small, or whether they where ignorant or learned, young or old, high or low; the only question as to safety was, whether they were trusting in the blood. Those who accepted God’s remedy in the blood, sprinkled their lintel and door-posts, and remained in their houses, under cover of that blood, until the destroying angel had passed over. Safety alone was in the blood. Thus showing us again that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

The ordinance of cleansing the leper also remarkably sets forth the value of the blood. The leprosy might be much or little, many spots or few, old standing or recent, still the leper was unclean — utterly unclean — unfit for the camp of Israel, until he was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. All other washings were in vain — every other remedy was useless. He might go here or there, do this or that, cover up his spots, and hide his sores, still he was utterly unclean. But the moment he was sprinkled with the blood he was pronounced clean. It was the blood that made the difference. It was the blood that cleansed the unclean. We are told,

Then shall the priest sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from his leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean (see Lev. 14:7).

How blessed this is! How clearly it illustrates that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Let me only add on this point, that directly the leper was pronounced clean, the living bird, having been identified with the dead bird by being dipped in its blood, was

let loose into the open field (see Lev. 14:7);

so the resurrection of Christ from the dead is God’s public proof that Christ had by Himself purged our sins with His own blood.

We find the Holy Ghost again putting honor upon the blood, and showing its vital importance in the beautiful action of the high priest entering into the holy place (Lev. 16). The apostle Paul, commenting on this, tells us in Heb. 9, that into the holiest of all

went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood (Heb. 9:7).

And why not without blood? Because nothing else shelters sinful man from the wrath of God but the blood; for nothing else remits sin. It would have been death to Aaron to enter into the holiest of all without blood. Moses was thus commanded:

Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times. . . within the vail before the mercy seat, . . . that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place, with a bullock for a sin- offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering . . . and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and shall sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy- seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times (Lev. 16:2, 3, 14).

Thus we see another witness to the value of the blood, as being the way of access into God’s presence, and showing us again that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

And I ask the reader to mark these various testimonies of Scripture to the efficacy of the blood, and to consider whether the evidence is not conclusive, that those only are on the true ground of peace and blessing whose confidence is in the blood — the precious blood of Christ. Nothing less than the blood could shelter Israel, cleanse the leper, or enable the high priest to stand in God's presence; neither can anything but the blood of Christ cleanse the conscience, give peace in God's presence, or shelter any from the wrath to come.

By the light of New Testament Scriptures, under the Spirit's teaching, we are able to see that all the various sacrifices for sin, &c., under the law, pointed to the one offering of Christ; consequently, since the death of Christ, the sacrifices of bulls and of goats have ceased to be offered. They served a good purpose in shadowing forth the one all-efficacious sacrifice that was coming, and in showing the power of His blood, not only to give us eternal safety, but to answer every question of conscience, as well as every requirement of God's holiness. Therefore the apostle Paul tells us, that in those many sacrifices under the law there was remembrance of sins, but no remission; they could not purge the conscience, because they could not take away sin; but that Christ, by His one offering, which He once offered, put away sin; therefore the blood of Christ purges the conscience to serve the living God. The apostle Peter also says,

Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Hence, when we read that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11),

we are to understand that reference is made to the blood of Jesus.

It is blessed to notice, in the words immediately preceding the text we are considering, the grace of God as the provider of this atoning blood.

The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement (reconciliation) for your souls (Lev. 17:11).

This at once opens up to us the blessed truth, that God Himself is the source of our redemption; that He gave His Son — sent forth His Son — sent His Son to be the Savior of the world; so that our faith and hope might be in God, and that we might find access with confidence in His presence. And surely it is in the cross that God sets forth the atoning blood. There He shows that He loves us. There it was, by the death of His Son, that God reconciled us unto Himself. Surely it is the blood, the blood of Christ, that makes atonement for our souls. And in comparing our text with New Testament Scriptures, we shall see that we have remission of sins by the blood, justification by the blood, peace by the blood, nearness to God in Christ and by His blood, that we worship on the ground of the blood, and shall enter into glory because of the value of blood. May the Lord help us to consider each of these points a little!

1. REMISSION OF SINS BY THE BLOOD. The Divine testimony, that

without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22),

is enough to show the utter impossibility of obtaining forgiveness of sins but through the blood. God cleanses us on the ground of sin having been judged and put away. This Christ has done. He declares that His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. Had He stopped a hair's-breadth short of death, we could not have had forgiveness. But He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; thus justice was satisfied, and sins were purged. Hence all those who are trusting in the blood of Christ are forgiven. In Him we have redemption through His blood — the forgiveness of sins. The blood, then, is that which gives remission of sins. All the priests and cardinals in the world may pronounce pardon, but

without shedding of blood is no remission.

Some persons say, "I think my sins are forgiven, because I feel so different"; or, "I think they will be forgiven, if I live differently"; but it is all wrong; such people are deceived, because they are not trusting in the blood; for

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

2. JUSTIFICATION BY THE BLOOD. Men may try to justify themselves before their fellow-men, and sometimes succeed in doing so; but we cannot justify ourselves before God. He knows that we are all guilty and unrighteous, and we cannot truthfully take any other ground. But the Scriptures teach us that those only who believe in the Lord Jesus are justified, and that they are justified from all things by Him. In the blood, God declares that He is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. God justifies us through the blood; for the blood of Jesus not only tells us of sin put away, but also of One who was perfectly obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; so that, by the obedience of One, many are made righteous. Therefore we are also told, that

being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Rom. 5:9).

We have, then, present justification, not by our own devotedness, or good intentions, but by the blood; so that all who believe in Christ are justified, now justified, by the blood of Jesus. How clear it is, then, that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul!

3. PEACE BY THE BLOOD. Every one who has peace with God knows that it is only through the precious blood of Christ. Nothing quenches the burning of a guilty conscience but the blood. It was nothing less than the death of Christ that satisfied God's justice; therefore that only pacifies the conscience. This is why the Holy Ghost so often uses those texts which refer to the blood of Christ to give peace to anxious souls. It is an already accomplished peace. He hath made peace by the blood of His cross, and God is now preaching peace by Jesus Christ; not peace by ordinances, duties, and the like, but peace by Jesus Christ; and all who simply look to Christ, and know that they are justified by His blood, have peace with God; not shall have, but

have peace with God (Rom. 5:1).

How is it that many anxious souls have not peace? Because they do not believe what God says about the value of the sacrifice of Christ. They look to themselves, to see if their experience is good enough, bad enough, or religious enough; so that, as frames and feelings change, they alter their judgment of safety. The end of looking to experience for peace must be disappointing; but when, driven out of self and its wretchedness, they look simply to the Lord Jesus, who shed His blood to save sinners, they find peace.

Others are greatly distressed with the fear of death. They do not see that Christ has died in their stead, that He was brought into the dust of death, and tasted death, with all its terrors and judgments, for them; and forget that Jesus said,

If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death (John 8:51).

It is true, we may fall asleep in Jesus, but it is a stingless death; and death is so far behind us, and we have been so judicially delivered from it by our Substitute on the cross, that we shall not all sleep; for when Christ descends from heaven, redemption-work will be applied to the bodies of those who are alive, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be eternally in the presence and likeness of Jesus.

The full peace of others is hindered by the thought of coming judgment. They think that Christ must have us before Him as the Judge, before we can be sure of being saved. This is not true. Christ has been judged for us; our sins have been already condemned in Him, removed from us, borne, suffered for, and put away by Him on the cross: so that, instead of our sins being judged again, God declares,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (Heb. 10:17);

that they are cast behind His back, &c. Therefore it is clear that Christ hath borne death and judgment for us according as it is written,

AS it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: SO Christ was once offered (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Thus we see that, death and judgment having been settled for us by Christ, we are called to rejoice in hope of glory; not to be looking for Christ as the Judge, but as our Bridegroom. Not to be expecting to be tried at a general assize, but to be looking for God’s Son from heaven, when we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. Saved ones giving an account of their stewardship at the tribunal of Christ is another thing; but that will not take place until we have glorified bodies, and are like Christ, and with Him for ever.

Again, there are some who have not peace, because they look to the work of the Spirit in them for peace, instead of the work of Christ for them. They see clearly and rightly that it is only by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost that any one can enter into the kingdom of God, and they look into themselves for the movings and actings of the Spirit for peace instead of the blood. They do not know that the Spirit’s office is not to testify of Himself, but of Christ; that He shows us the beauty and glory of Christ, and the blessedness and suitability of His finished work. The Holy Ghost does not say that He has made peace, but that Christ has made peace. He points us to Christ and His blood for forgiveness, peace, righteousness, justification, and redemption. The Spirit comforts us by ministering Christ and His truth to our souls. Therefore we know we are born again, and have the Spirit, because we find peace with God through Christ’s blood. The Spirit writes God’s law (or truth) in our minds and in our hearts; so that we not only remember it, but feel it, and have our affections kindled by it, because He testifies to us of God’s love. Christ is our peace, not the Spirit, because

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

But I must pass on, and can only briefly notice the three remaining points.

4. WE HAVE NEARNESS TO GOD BY THE BLOOD. Our sins separated us from God. Naturally we were far from God, but now in Christ, and through His blood, we are made nigh — brought to the Father’s bosom. Thus the believer stands forgiven and blest in God’s holy presence; thus he is sanctified by the blood of Christ, reconciled unto God, and stands in happy confidence and grace before Him in love.

5. WE WORSHIP ON THE GROUND OF THE BLOOD. We enter into the holiest

by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19),

and worship the Father. In ourselves there is no ground of praise and thanksgiving, but everything to make us abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes; but the blood so fully witnesses to us of the Father’s love, and of our eternal redemption and peace, that we praise and magnify the unsearchable riches of Divine grace. Our consciences are purged, our hearts gladdened, our minds in peace, our souls lifted up; so that we are ready to say,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

6. WE SHALL ENTER GLORY BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD. We are purchased by the blood of Jesus. Our hope of glory is Christ, not self. Had not the corn of wheat fallen into the ground and died, it would have been alone; but having died, it brings forth much fruit. All believers are the fruit of Christ’s death, are washed in His blood, and will be around the throne of God in heaven, as brought there solely on the ground of the blood of the Lamb. Then we shall sing more sweetly (but not more truly than we can now),

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 1:5, 6).

Then it will be fully known that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul (Lev. 17:11).

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Cleansing of the Leper, The

Leviticus 14:1-8.

The ordinance in Israel of the cleansing of the leper gives us a touching picture of God's way of cleansing a sinner, and bringing him back into His own blessed presence to worship and serve before Him.

Leprosy was a remarkable type of sin. It entirely unfitted a man for the presence of God. His place was

without the camp (Lev. 13:46).

Whether he had few spots or many, he was pronounced

utterly unclean (Lev. 13:44).

All that he could therefore truly say of himself was,

Unclean, unclean (Lev. 13:45).

The disease was most defiling. God alone could make a leper clean, and fit to come into the camp.

The true place therefore of a leper was outside the camp of Israel, outside every thing of God — His presence, His service, His worship; with rent garments, head uncovered, and upper lip tied up, calling out,

Unclean!

lest any coming near should contract defilement.

It is well for any now who take this self-loathing place, as without God, unclean, and undone before Him, unfit for His presence. Surely it is the only true place; for we are told, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8),

that all

are guilty before Him (see Rom. 3:19).

God, however, could meet the leper in this foul and hopeless condition, and bring him back into the camp cleansed, and fit for His presence. And in this ordinance we see great principles shadowed forth, as to the way in which God has met us in our sin and guilt, fitted us for His own blessed presence, and made us to find rest and peace before Him in love.

1st. THE LEPER WAS BROUGHT UNTO THE PRIEST (Lev. 13:2). Wherever else he went, or to whatever person, it would be wholly unavailing. Out of all the people in the world, this one, and he only, had power from God to deal with the leprosy, and pronounce him clean. So we know that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus only is the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. The sinner must have to do with the Lord Jesus about his sins, or be outside God's presence for ever. There is salvation in no other. Jesus says,

Come (Matt. 11:28)!

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

How clear and encouraging this is!

2ndly. HE WAS EXAMINED BY THE PRIEST —

The priest shall look and behold if the plague of leprosy be healed (Lev. 14:3).

The leper stood with his leprous spots exposed to the scrutinizing eye of God's priest. Dealing with God, through Christ, about our sin is no light matter. It is a deeply solemn experience, to fall under the searching eye of God in His infinitely holy presence. To feel oneself a sinner before a sin-hating God, can only be endured by the knowledge of the fact that He is a sinner-loving God; for all things are naked and open before Him. There is not a secret thing which is not wholly uncovered before His eye.

3rd. CLEANSING ONLY BY THE DEATH OF ANOTHER. The leper had to learn at this solemn moment, that he could be cleansed only by a sacrifice being offered. A live bird was therefore taken, and killed over running or living water; for the death of Christ is connected with the outflowing of eternal life. And surely God teaches the soul that is exercised about his sins before Him, that it is only by the death of Christ that he can be brought to stand in acceptance with Him; for

without blood-shedding there is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

The leper saw, in the suffering and death of the bird, God's way of meeting him in order to cleanse him from his uncleanness. So it is only by the death of Jesus, the Son of God, that the sinner finds peace with God, and cleansing of sin;

for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Then he saw the living bird, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, dipped into the blood of the dead bird: thus in a figure the dead bird is identified with the living bird, in order to be a type of Him who was dead and is alive again, and that for evermore. The dignity or majesty, incorruptibility, perfect humility, and other characteristics of Christ, may be typified by the scarlet, and cedar wood, and hyssop, to show us the infinite power and efficacy of His precious blood.

4th. THE SPRINKLING OF BLOOD. There the leper stood looking at God's work for him, and then receiving God's remedy, and hearing God's sentence. He did nothing to merit any good, but received all from the God of Israel. Feeling his utter uncleanness and unfitness for God's presence, his mouth was stopped, while the priest sprinkled the blood upon him seven times, and

pronounced him clean (see Lev. 14:7).

This is most blessed. It touchingly shows us that salvation is of the Lord. It gave perfect assurance to the leper, and left no room for a question. Whatever he felt, or others suggested, he had the consciousness that he was under the power of the blood; and, through that alone, God’s Priest had pronounced him clean.

And so the believer now, who simply has to do with Christ — God’s only Savior — about his sins, is entitled to perfect peace, entirely on the ground that Christ died for our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; for God’s word declares we are now justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). We are thus pronounced clean.

5th. THE LIVING BIRD IS THEN LET LOOSE, to prefigure a risen Savior.

After he had purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high (see Heb. 1:3).

So that the resurrection and ascension of Christ give perfect assurance that God was fully satisfied with Christ’s atoning work, and that He saw in His death upon the cross an answer to every claim of Divine holiness and justice, and the complete blotting out of the sins of His people. It was not possible that He should be holden (held by) of death — His flesh saw no corruption; but he was counted worthy of all glory, because he had so fully glorified the Father on the earth, and finished, the work that He gave Him to do. Until the leper was cleansed, the living bird was detained; but the efficacy of the dead one being fully attested by the leper being pronounced clean, it was

let loose into the open field (see Lev. 14:7).

What peace and comfort this must have ministered to the poor leper! and what perfect rest of soul the knowledge of Christ risen from the dead and gone into heaven gives us! Surely we can sing

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6th. THE LEPER CLEANSED HIMSELF. After he was pronounced clean, he cleansed himself and came into the camp. He washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and washed himself, and in this way came into the camp. So the believer that has had to do with God about his sins, and has the enjoyment of present forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Jesus, has no confidence in the flesh; he sees that he himself in the flesh is thoroughly unclean, that every thing connected with him naturally is unclean also, and that all his natural comeliness, all that he formerly gloried in, cannot bear the light of God’s presence. But he acknowledges it unclean and unfit for God’s eye, and sees it all cleansed by the word of God, which testifies to the everlasting efficacy of the blood of Jesus.

Now,

said Jesus,

ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you (John 15:3).

Made nigh in Christ Jesus, and through His blood, we can, by the Spirit, enjoy God’s presence, worship the Father, and serve Him acceptably.

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