

The Precious Blood.

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There is wide scope in the Lord's words to His disciples concerning the cup, as recorded by the Spirit in the first Gospel. On the solemn night of His betrayal, "He took the cup" (having previously handed to the disciples the bread), "and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many, for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26: 27, 28). The contrast is immense between the new covenant, of which the precious blood is the basis, and the covenant made by Jehovah with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. At Sinai, God proposed to His people His law — His requirement from man in the flesh — setting forth blessing as the result of obedience, and condemnation and death as the sure results of failure and sin. And that covenant was not dedicated without blood." For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and al; the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you" (Heb. 9: 19, 20; Ex. 24). The blood thus sprinkled was the sign of death, the consequence of disobedience and sin. We know how this ended with regard to that people — in disaster and ruin. God had scarcely inscribed the law when the first commandment was broken in the camp by the making of the golden calf. All was thus over; and had God kept Israel to the strict terms of their engagement, He would have destroyed them in a moment.

But there was intercession: Moses went up into the mount and pleaded their cause with Jehovah, asking rather to be himself blotted out of the book which He had written (Ex. 32: 32). Jehovah heard His servant, and declared Himself to be "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" etc.; and on that ground Israel was governmentally spared, and brought into the land.

And what were they doing when **Christ was** here? Glorifying in the law, making broad their phylacteries, etc., scrupulous as to ritual; yet about to fill their cup of iniquity to the brim, by the betrayal and murder of Himself — their Messiah. All was thus over as regards the first covenant: man had proved himself hopelessly bad and corrupt, a transgressor from the first giving of the law, now an enemy. How seek further for goodness in the first man? It was not to be found, though God had borne patiently and long. How precious then to hear the Lord speaking of the new covenant, and of His own blood as the basis of it! Jeremiah of old spoke of a new covenant to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah in the latter days — different from the covenant which God made with their fathers when He took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. Jehovah would put His laws within their hearts and write them in their minds, remembering their sins and iniquities no more (Jer. 31).

This is grace — sovereign grace; the righteous ground is the precious blood. How wondrously therefore has God acted! The precious blood, once shed by guilty Israel, and which they desired to be on them and their children, is the righteous basis of all blessing for that law-breaking people in another day. Anticipatively we who compose the church enjoy the blessings, while having no direct connection with the covenants, which belong to Israel as the apostle speaks in Rom. 9: 4. All that they will enjoy by-and-by we enjoy now; and, of course, much more besides. Was not the blood of Christ "shed for many"? We do well to note this language, occurring as it does in the Gospel of *Matthew*. In the Luke account we have the words "shed for you": language precious personal to all at the table, on that

solemn night; but in the first Gospel the expression is more general, and intentionally so, "shed for many." Now Matthew, as is generally known, presents the Lord as the Messiah of Israel; but His rejection by that people opens the door for blessing to those outside the Jewish circle. Similar language is found in Heb. 9: 28: "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of *many*." Do not we count among the "many"? Israel's unbelief has not stemmed the tide of divine grace, but has been the occasion, in the wisdom of God, of diverting it (though only for a while) from themselves and causing it to overflow all barriers, so that it may reach outside ones such as we.

Therefore "remission of sins" is our happy portion, the purchase of that blood, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. There is all the difference, as far as the soul's enjoyment goes, between "pretermission" and "remission." The former is the word used by the Spirit (though not so rendered in the A. V.) in Rom. 3: 25), and relates to the sins that are past; *i.e.*, those committed before the sacrifice of Christ was accomplished.

These were forgiven, not on the ground of the blood of bulls and goats, — though the offering of these was the occasion when forgiveness was pronounced — but on the ground of the incomparable sacrifice of Christ which was ever before the mind of God. God has now been proved righteous in all His dealings with His saints of old. But "pretermission" imparted not that lasting peace which the Christian enjoys; a purged conscience was a blessing unknown. But all is now ours, in virtue of the shed blood of Christ, our sins are remitted, we have a purged conscience, and walk in the enjoyment of cloudless peace. W. W. F.