

THE POWER OF THE BLOOD

or

The Full Assurance of Faith

“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” (Rev 12:10-11).

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“Having therefore boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” (Hebrews 10:19-22)

1. The problem stated: The Accuser of the Brethren

Scripture exhorts us to know the devices of the enemy (2 Cor 2:11).

One of his prime devices is revealed in two of his names: Satan and the devil. Both words mean basically the same. In Greek "devil" means 'accuser'; in Hebrew "Satan" means 'adversary, especially in a court of law.

In Bible times far greater importance was attached to a name than today. So, these two names are highly significant in revealing one of the enemy's chief strategies. Please note this carefully. It is not a finer point of theological exposition, but extremely practical and relevant.

Every Christian will undergo attack along the lines suggested by these names. They tell us that one of the enemy's principal activities is to accuse the brethren (Rev 12: 10b; cp Job 1 and 2). He continually condemns the Christian in his conscience by reminding him of past and present sins, and the sinfulness of his heart compared with the holiness of God.

The effect is very simple but devastatingly effective: a guilty conscience. And this brings separation from God through fear. It is highly significant that the first time fear is mentioned in the Bible is when Adam heard God's voice after he had sinned. The consciousness of sin always produces fear of meeting a holy God. The invariable consequence is to hide from Him (Gen 3: 8-10). No fellowship is possible when fear is present. Three ways in which this fear is revealed are outlined below.

1. Many genuine people seek through strenuous efforts, in bondage to their condemning consciences, an initial assurance of salvation and a removal of the awful consciousness of their sin. They are unable to enter into the joy of their salvation, being uncertain as to whether or not they are saved. Wesley, among others, sought for years for this personal assurance that God had forgiven and accepted him. Only a revelation of the power of the Blood brought peace to his troubled soul. Hence the strong emphasis in Methodist preaching on the personal initial assurance of sins forgiven.
2. Many Christians, even though assured of their salvation, are troubled by a condemning conscience in their everyday lives. When they sin, they confess without any assurance of being forgiven. They do not have a full confidence, so when they approach God, they still retain the memory of the sin committed. They cannot enter into the fulness of a rich personal fellowship with Him in the Holy of Holies, with their hearts reaching out in simple loving trust.
3. In addition Christians often lack full confidence in God's love for them not only because of specific sins but because of an undue awareness of the sinfulness of their hearts. Continual looking within produces a sense of unworthiness and a continual, wearing,

inner self-condemnation which creates a feeling of not being fit to worship, to pray, or to do any form of God's service.

Having seen some of the effects of this satanic strategy, let us see how it can be overcome.

His tactic is based on a continual emphasis on our sins, both past and present, and the sinfulness of our very nature in the light of God's justice. So, it will be necessary to show clearly how the demands of that justice have been met, so as to present us guiltless in His presence.

When we see that the demands of God's righteous law were met by *Himself* paying the price through His love towards us, we will feel able to come boldly and confidently into His presence (Heb 4:16; 10:19,22). *"If our heart condemn us not then have we confidence towards God"* (1 Jn 3: 21). Moreover, it will give birth to a love within that will progressively banish all fear, the more we plumb its depths. *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment* (i.e. it brings with it the thought of punishment). *He that feareth is not made perfect in love"* (1 Jn 4: 18).

This then is the aim of this study:

- to expose Satan's tactics, and
- to show how to overcome them.

Both personal experience and observation of other Christians have brought a realisation of just how powerful a weapon this satanic device is. It is necessary to grasp the depths of God's love and the total effectiveness of the Blood to meet every accusation against us in order to have confidence towards God. This study aims to provide a solid Word foundation for such a confidence. Only by letting the Word find a permanent home within will the wicked one be overcome (1 Jn 2:14).

2. A Biblical illustration

Zechariah 3: 1-7 helps make clearer the method of, and counter-attack to, Satan's strategy.

Joshua was the first high-priest after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity. He and Zerubbabel, the governor, were rebuilding the temple so as to re-introduce the worship of God in the way He wanted. There were, however, many delays and discouragements. Enemies opposed them from without.

But there was a more subtle and deadly enemy within, sapping away at the very fibre of Joshua's strength: the continual condemnation of Satan that, since they were not worthy to worship nor minister in God's temple, there was no point in their building it.

Is this not something suffered by many of God's children? Consider well how your own heart is undermined, not by lack of zeal or desire to work, but by an oppressive sense of unworthiness.

This fact of this oppression and its answer were revealed to Zechariah in a vision:

Zech 3:1 Satan himself is seen standing alongside Joshua in the process of fulfilling his ministry. He is resisting him by accusing and opposing him before God. ("The Angel of the Lord" is the OT visible manifestation of God).

Zech 3: 3 The accusation seems so just. Joshua was unclean in God's presence, his sinfulness so very plain before a holy God.

Zech 3:2 The solution to Joshua's unworthiness is revealed to Zechariah so as to strengthen Joshua to overcome the accuser: Joshua's worthiness to stand before God to minister is not based on his own worth, but on God's grace. He had chosen him in spite of what he was.

Zech 3: 4-5 So, Joshua is now arrayed in clean garments. The "fair mitre" is a turban worn by the High Priest bearing a small golden plate on it, containing the words "Holiness unto the Lord". This means that, despite Satan's condemnation, in God's eyes Joshua was holy and fit to minister before Him.

Zech 3: 7b Not only was he holy in God's eyes, he would be able to enter the Holy of Holies; to stand in the very place where God himself dwelt.

Just as God assured Joshua that He had made him worthy to enter His presence so does He beckon *us* to go boldly into that same Holy of Holies (Heb 10: 19-22).

This boldness is based on a revelation of how the Blood of Jesus has made this possible. Our next task is to show this.

3. The Blood of the Cross

Calvary is the fullest revelation of the depths of God's love. To see this is to know confidence in His presence.

Consider 1 John 4: 16-19. The fear referred to here is that of standing before a holy God with a consciousness of sinfulness. Notice carefully how it is the realisation of God's love for us that removes fear. It is when we see how He loves us that our love blossoms out towards Him: "*We love Him because He first loved us*" (v 19). "*We have known and believed the love that God has to us*" (v 16). It is by dwelling in His love that we gain confidence for the day of judgement. (v 17).

Many times, when the presence of God has filled a meeting, and there has been a deep awareness of His love, I have seen Christians who normally live with a strong consciousness of their sinfulness, with tears filling their eyes and their hearts opening up to His love. When the fear that God is going to condemn us is removed, there arises a response of love from the heart. Once the deep awareness of God's love is lost, however, those same hearts are again overcome by condemnation.

Not only is the shed Blood of Jesus a revelation of God's love, however. It was also a legal transaction whereby every charge brought against the believer by the accuser is fully answered. To know this is to know deliverance from a condemning conscience.

There are two aspects of the power of the Blood to consider:

- the completed past work of Calvary, and
- the present ministry of Christ in heaven.

(a) The completed work of Calvary

When Jesus cried on the cross "It is finished", those words had an application the effects of which continue to the present day. The work of redemption is fulfilled. He has done all that is necessary; there is nothing that can, or need be added. He has obtained eternal redemption for us. Its effects and effectiveness are everlasting and unfailing.

A revelation of this should solve the problems of any genuine believer who lacks assurance of salvation. Let us see how the Blood is so effective by examining the full meaning of redemption and justification.

Unless converted, all men are subject to the kingdom (i.e. rule and authority) of darkness (Col 1:13). Satan has a legal right over them. Since God is a law giver, and a law-abiding God. Satan calls upon God to carry out the just demands of His law on every sinner.

Now here is where the justice and the love of God meet. How could God acquit a guilty sinner in order to express His love to him without violating His holiness? Or, as Paul puts it: how could He be both just (when justice would demand punishment of the sinner) *and* the Justifier (i.e. Acquitter) of the sinner which believes in Jesus {Ro 3: 26}?

The answer lies in the law of the kinsman-redeemer (Lev 25: 47-55).

Under this law, if a man sold himself into slavery it was possible for someone else to pay the ransom price for him to give him back his freedom and his lost inheritance. There were three conditions, however: the redeemer had to be:

- a near kinsman,
- able to pay the price,
- willing to pay the price (as there was no obligation to do so).

This law provided a way for many an Israelite who had sold himself to a creditor to be redeemed by a willing relative with sufficient means. But, when applied to a sinful man, sold under sin, it seemed to provide no hope. There was no man *able* to pay the price demanded to buy his fellow man from sin's dominion, even if he had been *willing*. Since all had sinned each was himself answerable for his own sin, and was thus unable to pay the debt of another.

This is where the love and the righteousness of God meet. He both fulfilled the requirement of the law and showed mercy to the sinner.

Since God Himself was the only sinless One He alone was *able* meet the ransom price. Being *willing* to do so, He was made in the likeness of men to fulfil the legal requirement that a redeemer be a *kinsman*: Immanuel, God with us.

1 P 1: 18-19 The ransom price paid was His own Blood. Since it is incorruptible, imperishable and immortal, it is never liable to decay and so never diminishing in its power,. No wonder Peter called it *precious* Blood!

Heb 9:12 Since the ransom price shall never lose its power, our redemption is eternal. We are eternally free from Satan's dominion.

Heb 10:1-4, 14-18 The blood of the animals shed under the old covenant was powerless to *remove* sins, it could only *cover* them. The incorruptible Blood of Jesus, however, completely *takes away* all our sins and iniquities.

Ro 5:9 The Blood not only *redeems*, it *justifies*. Justification is another legal term. It means to acquit, or declare not guilty in a law court. So, the Blood not only provides the ransom price to buy us back from Satan's jurisdiction. It also fully answers every charge brought against us in a law court as to our past sins.

Let us see how:

Col 2: 14 The first part of this verse is more clearly rendered: "Having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands". The picture here is of a creditor who cancels and writes off a debt which is legally due to him. The meaning is that we sinners were debtors who had to pay the price of our sin, the price demanded by the law of God. But the Blood of Christ was shed to clear that debt,. So God has cancelled the bill we owed.

Nailing it to the cross is a reference to an ancient custom whereby a creditor, when a debt was cleared, would nail it to the debtor's door. So, when Jesus shed His precious Blood, God took the account listing our trespasses and showing the price due to clear our debts, and nailed the receipted bill to the cross marked "paid"! There is no charge outstanding against the account of a Blood-washed Christian. The Blood clears the slate.

Isa 53:7a Another verse showing the same truth. The word 'oppressed' here does not so much mean to treat badly in a general sense. It refers more specifically to a creditor mercilessly exacting every last penny due to him from an impoverished debtor.

In this particular verse the meaning is that when Jesus died on the cross, the price of every last sin charged to our account was paid by Him. No mercy was shown Him. He had to fully clear every outstanding debt. Oh precious Blood! Now therefore we stand unaccusable before our Father's presence.

Col 1:20-22 This expands the last point more fully. Note carefully: the Blood of the Cross presents you holy, blameless and unreprouvable in the Father's presence. ('Blameless" means 'giving no occasion for being brought to a law court'). No fault can be found in you. When you stand in His presence you stand innocent and unaccusable. Do not fail to grasp the full power of these words, and to apply them personally.

Heb 12: 24 The Blood has a voice, and it still speaks today. The shed Blood of Abel cried out from the ground to God for vengeance (Gen 4:10). But the Blood of Jesus cries for forgiveness. Just as Abel's blood did not go unheard, neither does Jesus'.

The Blood, then, brings us back to God. It presents us absolutely unaccusable before Him. Through providing a complete assurance of past sins being forgiven, it lays a foundation for full confidence towards God.

It does more than this, however. Through the continuing, present, high-priestly ministry of Christ, the Blood also deals with sins committed after conversion, and also with our growing awareness of the essential sinfulness of our hearts. Both of these can rob of that initial peace

and assurance of salvation gained when we first repented and saw how the Blood fully paid the price of our past sins.

(b) Christ's present heavenly ministry

1 Jn 2: 1-2 If we do sin Jesus is our Advocate (i.e. Defence-lawyer in a court). The picture is of our being brought to Court every time we sin. God, since He is holy, should pass the sentence demanded by the law. Jesus, however, is as our Lawyer. Although we have sinned, we are acquitted since Jesus has already paid the price required by the law. The Blood is the evidence. It is effective, not only for past sins, but also for present and future. ('Propitiation' means an offering for sin that satisfies God's justice and allows Him to freely pardon the sinner.)

1 Jn 1: 9 Since the penalty due has already been paid, then God is acting justly to forgive a condemned man, so long as he confesses his sin. It is not a forgiveness granted at the expense of overlooking the righteous demands of the Law. These were fully exacted of Jesus on Calvary.

Rev 12: 10b-11 Based on the foregoing, we can now go a step further in unveiling Satan's devices. The word 'devil' does not just mean 'accuser', it really means 'false accuser', 'slanderer'. How is this significant? In that when he condemns our consciences, reminding us of our past and present sins, and of our sinful hearts, his accusation is false, no matter how much it is based on fact. How can this be? Because, although his accusation against us may be true, nonetheless the Blood of Jesus has fully atoned for it. It presents us innocent and unaccusable before God. So, his accusation is false because he slanders the Blood, concealing its power or causing us to doubt its complete effectiveness. He says we are guilty when God is just to forgive and acquit us.

This is why we are told that the brethren overcame the accuser by the Blood. To learn this well is to seriously blunt Satan's ability to use the tactics we have been discussing in our own personal experiences.

Ro 8:33-34 In the light of all this, who can bring any accusation to God against His elect? God Himself will not, for it is He who acquits us, and His decision is righteous. When our conscience condemns us, it is not Christ Who is responsible. He died for past sins to cleanse from an evil conscience, and now continues as our great High-Priest in heaven interceding and making representations for sins since conversion. Every possible just charge brought against us by our accusing prosecutor has been fully answered by our Defence Lawyer, Christ. Therefore God, since every righteous demand of His holiness against all sin has been met, can and does freely forgive as His love desires.

As the hymnwriter says, "No condemnation now I dread...'

Heb 7:22 We have seen how Jesus now exercises a heavenly ministry of intercession on our behalf acting as our Defence-lawyer. Let us now look at the significance of His ministry as the Surety of the new covenant sealed in His Blood.

A surety is a guarantor; someone who guarantees that if you do not keep an obligation, he will make good your failure. For example, If someone guarantees an H.P. agreement, and the purchaser runs away with the goods before the final payment is made, then the guarantor has to pay the balance. As far as the H.P. company is concerned, the debt is then fully cleared.

The Bible advises against this practice, even for a friend (Pro 6: 1-5,11-15; 20:16; 22: 26-27), because many undertake to guarantee someone and then are unable to pay the price when the other defaults.

Jesus, however, knew what the full consequences would be if He guaranteed us against failing to keep Gods Law: death. Yet, in grace, He became Surety for us when we were enemies and aliens in our minds (Eph 2: 4). Every last penny was exacted of Him when we defaulted. Therefore the debt was fully cleared. He made good every charge brought against us, and continues to do the same today.

Once more then we see that Jesus' present ministry keeps us clear of every failure and sin on our part, to present us unaccusable before God.

4. The Power of Confession

In order to fully experience the liberty that comes from a full understanding of the power of the Blood, It is essential to be humble and honest. Let us illustrate from 1 John 1.

1: 5 The key to experiencing the effective power of the Blood either after sinning or when the consciousness of our sinfulness is strong: God is light. Complete honesty and openness is vital.

1:8 & 10 To deny and hide from our sins or our sinfulness is but to deceive our own selves. No deliverance or peace will come from refusal to admit, no benefit from His high priestly ministry.

1:7 It is only when we “*walk in the light*” that the Blood cleanses. To try and justify sin, or to excuse it, or to deny it, is to walk in darkness. Only when it is brought out into the open and admitted can the Blood be effective in our consciences.

1:9 Confession is the key.

It is vital to confess sin fully and unreservedly. Forgiveness is only experienced when we throw ourselves wholly onto His grace and mercy. Remember: “*He giveth grace (undeserved favour) to the humble*” (1 P 5:5).

Heb 10:19-22 Notice again, before we can have the full assurance of faith, there must be a true heart; i.e., an honest and sincere heart. The Blood can only sprinkle from an evil conscience when the heart is humbled and sin confessed unreservedly for what it is, without self-justification.

5. The Evil Conscience

It must be clearly understood, however, that confession does not mean a continual bewailing and lamenting of past sin or the sinfulness of the heart. Even after sincere repentance and confession, however, many Christians still do not know deliverance from an evil conscience and so are still unable to enter into close fellowship with God.

To understand this let us examine the function of the conscience in the Bible.

The word itself means “a knowing with oneself”. It accuses or excuses our actions (Ro 2:15; Jn 8:9). It is not, however, infallible (1 Cor 4: 4). For example, it is possible to have a weak conscience (1 Cor 8: 7,10,12), e.g. when something is allowed by God but the individual’s conscience will not allow him to do it.

Herein lies the clue to the meaning of an “evil conscience”. It is a conscience that is still conscious of sin even though the Blood of Christ in God’s estimation is sufficient to cleanse from sin. It has not yet grasped the full power of the Blood to cleanse from all sin, and to present us holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.

The testimony of the conscience is not infallible. So, if our conscience condemns us, we must accept God’s testimony, not that of our conscience, as to the worth of the Blood to cleanse from sin. *“If we receive the witness (testimony) of men, the witness of God is greater”* (1 Jn 5:9)

Let us examine David’s reaction, once he had confessed his great sin in 2 Samuel 12, in order to learn how we should react after sinning and repenting of it.

12:1-12	David’s sin
12:13a	Open confession. No self-justification, as Adam and Eve (Gen 3:12-13)
12:13b	God’s forgiveness
12: 14-15	Chastening necessary (NB Chastening is not judgement)
12: 16-19	David’s intercession for his child’s life
12 20-23	His reaction on hearing of the child’s death.

A careful examination of this reaction is very revealing. David knew his God well. He had sinned and had confessed. Although chastening was necessary, he understood well that confession brings forgiveness. He did not therefore live in continual fear and condemnation. His intercession over, he went to the temple and worshipped. Though doubtless he grieved within because of his sin, yet he did not allow Satan to burden his mind with the feeling that God would continually remember his sin. When sin is confessed, fellowship is restored. He accepted God’s own word for it: *“If we confess.. He is faithful and just to forgive.. and to cleanse..”* (1 Jn 1: 9). And we must accept that forgiveness. It brings no honour to God to live in the consciousness of our past sins when He Himself has borne witness that Jesus’ Blood cleanses from them.

6. The Spirit and the Blood: or, The Inner Witness.

The Bible is a supernatural Book. Hence the need of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph 1:17). Just as God Himself is only known by revelation (Matt 16: 13-17; Matt 11: 27; 1 Cor 12: 3b), so also His Word (Matt 11: 25-26; Matt 13:10-17; Luke 24:16,31; 1 Cor 2:10-14). It is not God's intention for His Word to be known only in the mind; it should come by revelation to the heart. (2 Cor 4: 6). He intends that the indwelling Spirit of Truth should bear witness to the Word when preached thus leading into a full understanding and an inner assurance of its truth (1 Jn 2:20,27). Knowledge of the Word should not be traditional, but first-hand, by the direct personal witness to the individual heart of the same Spirit that first wrote it. They who are God's are taught of God (Jn 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9).

How does this relate to those suffering from lack of assurance of salvation, or whose consciences cannot free themselves from the remembrance of sins committed or of their sinfulness? In the following way: God has not merely given us His Word to show how the accusations of the evil one can be overcome; He has also given the Holy Ghost to bear witness to that Word within us.

Jesus said: *"My words are Spirit, and they are Life"* (Jn 6: 63). God gave the Holy Ghost to make real and personal within our own experiences the truths contained in His Word. Assurance of salvation and forgiveness is not meant to be based only on a knowledge of the Scriptures concerning the Blood, but on the indwelling Holy Ghost within us, confirming them to our own heart.

Who can shake a heart that knows the power of the Word, the Spirit and the Blood? The Word reveals the completeness of the Blood's cleansing power; the Spirit makes that Word living and powerful within. Redemption is by Blood and by power.

Let us examine some Scriptures to show this. The first (1 Jn 5:4-13) is a little difficult, but the others should present no problem.

1 Jn 5: 4-13 Faith overcomes every force arrayed against us in the world (vv 4-5). Faith in Jesus as Son of God is not merely based on historical facts however. The key verses are 6 & 8; these may be explained as follows:

At the waters of baptism the Father bore public witness of Who Jesus was (Matt 3: 16); again the Father bore witness of Him before His Blood was shed (Jn 12:27-33). In fact, the Roman centurion, seeing Him die, testified that Jesus was truly the Son of God (Mk 15: 39). But Jesus' death and the shedding of His Blood as a sacrifice for sins is more than just a fact testified by these three historical evidences. The Spirit of Truth bears witness to the effective power of the Blood making it real in us today, as real as if we ourselves had witnessed His death. The believer has this witness within himself (v 10). Therefore, he can know that he already now has eternal life (v 13).

1 Jn 3: 24b, 4:13 We know Christ indwells us because of the indwelling Spirit.

Heb 10: 14-15a The indwelling Holy Ghost bears witness of the effectiveness of the perfect offering of Christ.

1 Th 1:5 **Paul's** preaching was in the Holy Ghost and brought an "absolute certainty" (Amplified) to those who believed.

Gal 4: 6 If you are a son of God, God sends His Spirit who spontaneously cries out within us "Abba" (which in Aramaic means "Father").

Ro 8: 14-16 It is the Holy Spirit Himself who bears witness that we are God's children. Hence the full and complete inner assurance based not on passing feelings, nor on another's words, but on God Himself telling us we are His.

7. Conclusion: The Full Assurance of Faith

“Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2: 18). Herein lies the grand climax to this whole study: Through His Blood every charge brought against is dealt with. This knowledge combined with the inner ministry of the Holy Ghost make it possible for us to have access to the Father: not just in theory but in very deed. We have no need to hide behind a tree, like Adam, and to conceal our shame with a fig-leaf apron at the prospect of meeting a holy God. With hearts completely open and honest before Him, our consciences sprinkled by the Blood from all guilty fears, we are able to walk boldly into His very presence. The awareness of our great High Priest, ever interceding for us as our Advocate and Surety, gives a complete confidence of His loving acceptance of us. Satan’s accusations of man before God in the days before Jesus shed His precious Blood have been fully met. No longer do his slanders cause us to fear.

“Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.’

Brethren: *“Having therefore boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus.. .let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience...”* (Heb 10: 19-22).

APPENDIX

List of New Testament references on the Blood for further study:

Matthew 26:28

Mark 14:24

Luke 22:20

John 6:53-56

Acts 20:28

Romans 3:25; 5:9

1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:25, 27

Ephesians 1:7; 2:13

Colossians 1:14, 20

Hebrews 9 & 10 (especially 9:7, 12-14, 22; 10:19, 29)

Hebrews 12:24; 13:11-12, 20

1 Peter 1:2, 19

1 John 1:7; 5:6, 8

Revelation 5:9; 7:14; 12:11