

Sermon XXVII

"Consecration by Blood"

by
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"And he brought the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram. And he slew it; and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot." --Leviticus 8:22,23.

By "the ram of consecration" is meant the ram by which Aaron and his sons were consecrated, or set apart for the service of God. The victim was selected by Moses, who was thus representing God. It was not Aaron and his sons who chose the sacrifice; it was God who made the choice for them, and presented the ram to them that they might put their hands on it, and in so doing acknowledge it as God's appointed sacrifice and accept it as their substitute.

Thus, the transaction of sacrifice is here, as elsewhere, shewn to be *twofold*: Moses, as acting for God, exhibits one part; and Aaron, as acting for the people, exhibits the other. Moses chooses; Aaron, in Israel's name, accepts the choice. Moses presents the ram; Aaron, in Israel's name, puts his hand on it in token of laying sin upon it. Thus in one sense God lays our sins upon the sacrifice, but in another it is *we who lay our sins upon it*, when we bring them to it and confess them over its head.

It is this latter part of the great transaction that is so fully brought out in the Book of Leviticus and the other books relating to sacrifice. For though in one aspect Aaron represents Christ, in another he represents not Christ but Israel, or the Church. This is especially the case when his sons are associated with him, and when he places his hands on the head of the sacrifice and confesses sin upon it. He acts and speaks in the name of the people, confessing their sin and laying it on the Lamb of God. He thus represents not the Father but the sinner accepting the sacrifice provided by the Father. He represents not Christ but the sinner bringing his sin to Christ, and taking him as his substitute and surety. The Father's act in laying sin on Christ and our act in laying our individual sins on Christ are two things not to be confounded, and neither of them to be overlooked.

This personal dealing with the sacrifice, this putting the hand on the head of the ram of consecration as it was about to be slain, is the first part of the great transaction; and it is that part which represents the *forgiveness* of the individual thus personated [personified] by Aaron and his sons. Thus, the beginning of the consecration is forgiveness,--forgiveness through death,--the death of one selected by God to bear his sins. There can be no consecration without forgiveness; and upon forgiveness, consecration follows forthwith, being in fact a continuation of the sacrificial process through which the forgiveness is obtained.

This sacrificial process is very fully given us here. There is, *first*, the selection of the victim. There is, *secondly*, the transfer of the sinner's sin to this selected victim. There is, *thirdly*, the death of the victim. There is, *fourthly*, the transfer of its death to the sinner by putting the blood upon him. There is, *fifthly*, the sinner's new life after this has been gone through. There is,

lastly, his entire consecration to God in consequence of his whole man having thus died and risen.

1. *The selection of the victim.* As in all cases the lamb or goat on these great public occasions was to be chosen by Moses, so was our great Sacrifice chosen by God. "Behold my servant whom I have chosen," is God's message to us concerning him. And again, he says, "I have exalted one chosen out of the people." And in the New Testament he is called "the Christ, the chosen of God" (Luke 23:35). The great sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins, the lamb for the burnt-offering, is entirely of God's selection. And in this of itself we have the blessed assurance of its suitableness and perfection.

2. *There is the transfer of the sinner's sin to this selected victim.* Though, in one sense, this is done by God through that same eternal purpose by which the victim was selected, yet in another sense, and as a thing brought about (or becoming a fact) in time, it is the sinner that does this when he accepts the sacrifice, and putting his hand upon it confesses his sin over it. Then the *actual transfer* takes place, for up till that moment the sin had been lying on the sinner. It is upon our acceptance of God's sin-offering that the guilt, which had made us *unclean* in his sight, passes over to the appointed Substitute and leaves us *clean*. What he asks of us is simply our *sin*, our *guilt*; no more. He is appointed to receive and bear it. He beseeches us to transfer it to him, and to allow him to bear it all. And why should there be unwillingness to allow of such a transfer? Why should the relinquishment of condemnation be so slowly, so reluctantly consented to?

3. *There is the death of the victim.* According to the process described in our text, *the transfer is made while the victim is alive*; and then, he having been loaded with our transgressions, is led out to be slain. For as death was the due of our sin, so must it be the due of him to whom it is transferred. On whomsoever the guilt is found, on him must the penalty lie; and from him must that penalty be exacted to the uttermost. The soul that sins, it must die. *Death*, nothing less than *death*, must be inflicted wherever guilt is found; for law must take its course and righteousness must have its satisfaction. The only thing that can remove guilt from us forever is the *death* of him to whom it is transferred. In no other place can guilt be hidden, so as never to reappear against us, but the *grave*. Death pays the debt and exhausts the penalty; nothing short of death. Without that shedding of blood, which is the means of death and the evidence of its having taken place, is no remission.

4. *There is the transfer of this death to the sinner by putting the blood upon him.* The sinner's death is first of all transferred to the Surety, who dies as the sinner's substitute. Then the Surety's death is transferred back again to the sinner and placed to his account as if it had been his own. In *confession* we transfer our death to the Surety. In *believing* we transfer his death to ourselves so that, in the sight of God, it comes to be reckoned truly ours. This transference of the Surety's death to us is that which is set before us by the putting the *blood* upon us. For blood means death,--or life taken away; and the putting of blood upon us is the intimation the death has passed upon us,--and *that* death none other than the death of the Surety.

The putting the blood upon us is the identifying of us with him,--his death with ours,--so that thus we die with Christ and we are buried with Christ; and all in order, as we shall see, that we may rise again with Christ. It is in this way that we become partakers of the baptism wherewith he was baptized; not by being plunged in blood; not by our being brought to the blood, but by the blood being brought to, or applied to us; by having *blood put upon us*, as in the case of Aaron and

his sons, to signify that thus we were dead,--dead with him who died for us,--dead in virtue of the transference of his death to us by the sprinkling of the blood upon our persons.

It was not Aaron that sprinkled the blood upon himself or his sons. That would have meant that he was putting himself to death with his own hand, as a self-murderer. He neither sprinkled the blood upon himself nor did he plunge himself in the blood; that would have been the symbol of *suicide*, not of death by the hand of the law. It was Moses, representing God, that sprinkled the blood. Aaron but presented himself in the appointed place, put himself in the appointed position, and forthwith the symbol of death was administered to him. God, by the hand of Moses, sprinkled the blood upon him,--as an intimation that the death of the sacrifice had been transferred to him. It was by this baptism of blood, beside the altar where the sacrifice had died, that symbolised to Israel that which was not fully revealed till after years,--the sinners death with Christ; and told him that the time was coming when he should be in reality baptized into his death, made partaker of his death, that so he might also be partaker of his burial and his resurrection. It is God that sprinkles the blood of Christ upon the sinner and so transfers to him Messiah's surety-death upon the cross. And what God asks of every sinner here is, that coming to the great altar of sacrifice, even the cross of his Son, he would allow Him to transfer the Surety's death, with all its everlasting benefits of pardon and salvation and life, to him.

O sinner, it is this that your God this day asks of you! Not to do anything, but to let him do the whole. Not to put yourself to death, either in symbol or in reality, but to allow him to reckon to you the sinbearing death of his almighty Son. Wilt you not consent to this, and in consenting receive from his hand the baptism of blood by which the great death is made over to you, forgiveness sealed, and cleansing at once received?

Remember that that which God calls cleansing can only be accomplished by death. It is guilt that has made you unclean, and that uncleanness can only be removed by that which removes the guilt from between you and God. That guilt cannot be cancelled save by the death of the sacrifice applied to you. The application of that death by the sprinkling of the blood upon you is that which at once takes away your guilt and makes you wholly clean. Put yourself in the position which God asks you to do; that is, *believe* the Father's testimony to the death of his Son. The moment that you believe, the blood is sprinkled, the death is transferred, you are counted as one who has died and so paid the penalty,--and you are forgiven, accepted, *clean!*

5. *There is the sinner's new life thus received through death.* Aaron and his sons are marked with the symbol of death and so accounted as dead men; yet they go away alive. The stains of the blood are washed off at the laver, though the legal and ceremonial effects of it remain indelible. They are thus represented as men who have passed through death to a life beyond death,--who are alive from the dead. In other words, they are risen men, and as such they go forth to the service of God.

Just so is it now with the saints,--God's kings and priests. They have been baptized with Christ's baptism and have thus died with him. But having died with him they also rise; and, as risen men they go forth to serve Him who has done all for them. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of him who loved me." Made partakers of Christ's resurrection and Christ's life, they go forth to do his will in the strength of his risen life. It is as resurrection-men that they serve him; as men, partakers even here of the power of resurrection life, and who are drawing from that resurrection-fountain daily treasures of life wherewith to labour for him who died for them and

who rose again. If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, and make use of your risen life for duty, for temptation, for battle, for trial, for suffering. It will be sufficient for every time of need.

6. There is *the entire consecration of the whole man to God in consequence of his having thus died and risen*. The solemn act of consecration described in our text brings out this very fully. The victim is called the "ram of consecration," and it is the blood of this ram sprinkled upon Aaron and his sons which, while it symbolises their death and resurrection, represents their consecration to God and to his service by that same transaction. That which proclaimed them dead, in consequence of the applied death of the sacrifice, sets them apart for holy purposes in God's house.

Thus it is that the death and resurrection of our true ram of consecration, our better sacrifice, operate upon us. They "sanctify" us, as the apostle's expression is in the Epistle to the Hebrews : "Jesus also, that he might *sanctify* the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Thus we are "sanctified," or set apart, or consecrated, by the application of the blood; and hence the name of "saints," or "consecrated ones." God has thus taken special pains to show us that it is by the application of Christ's death and resurrection to us that this consecration takes place. It is thus, through the blood of sprinkling, that we are separated unto God as his true priests,--fitted to do his work here on earth and hereafter more fully, more gloriously in his kingdom. It is through death and resurrection that we pass to consecration for priestly service in the temple and kingdom above.

But the ceremony described in our text is a peculiar one. The body of Aaron was not plunged in blood, for the *quantity* of blood is of no consequence. The blood was merely applied to three places of his body, and by this the whole man was consecrated. The tip of the right ear was the first place, denoting that his hearing was now set apart for God, and that he was to be ever in the attitude of one listening to God alone,--hearing no words but his, heeding no instructions but his. The thumb of the right hand was the next place sprinkled, indicating the consecration of all bodily skill, and energy, and power, to the service of Jehovah, and telling him that that right hand and its "cunning" were to be used henceforth for no meaner employment than the work of the God of heaven. The great toe of the right foot was the third place touched with blood, signifying that his feet were to be ever ready for priestly service, that his limbs were to be employed for God, and their strength or swiftness solely dedicated to bearing his burdens or running his errands. The whole man, in all his faculties and powers of soul and body, was to be thus set apart for God.

It is this complete separation unto God that is effected by our participation in the death and resurrection of the Lord. In being made partakers of his baptism, nailed to his cross, buried in his grave, raised with his resurrection, we are totally consecrated to the service of him who raised up Christ from the dead, and who has thus raised us up with him and made us sit with him in heavenly places. Our ears, our hands, our feet are thus wholly his; not our own, not the world's, not Satan's. As those who have died with him and risen, we hear him always, and listen for his words and commands, ready to put forth hands and feet, every power and faculty of soul and body in the service of him with whom we died, with whom we are risen, and to whom we are thus solemnly set apart. If the baptism of Christ, applied to us in believing, has any meaning at all, it sets before us these things respecting ourselves,--first, we are wholly sinners, wholly guilty, subject to wrath and death; secondly, we are wholly forgiven, in consequence of our Surety's sin-bearing baptism of death for us; for in His death we are dead. Next, we are wholly risen from

death in virtue of our Surety's resurrection; and lastly, we are wholly consecrated unto God through means of this death and resurrection. The whole man from head to feet becomes a sacred thing, dedicated to the service of the living God.

Our ears are thus set apart to God. And if so, how wide open should they be to hear his voice, how thoroughly closed against all sinful sounds. They are the ears of risen men and should have no sympathy with unholy words or vain conversation or earthly frivolities. Our hands are thus consecrated to God. Let us use them for him alone, anxious not to profane the vessel thus set apart for the master's use. Our feet are set apart for him. Let us run the errands of no other master, nor use our limbs in the service of the flesh or the world or the world's king. As God's consecrated priests--his true Aarons, his true Levites, his true Israel-- let us reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin but alive unto righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do all to the glory of God.

Follow the Master fully. Give him no divided heart. Serve him wholly. Give him no half-and-half service. Think of yourselves as alive from the dead, as partakers of Christ's baptism and death and resurrection, and act accordingly. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but "yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:12, 13). "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1).

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