Ecclesiastes - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 14

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“There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man” —Ecclesiastes 9:14,15.

THE little city is Bunyan’s Mansoul. The cruel adversary is Satan, the prince and god of this world. The poor wise man is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who by His death on Calvary has delivered those once in fear of death and so held all their lifetime in dreadful bondage. Strange that we should ever forget One who has wrought so mightily on our behalf! Surely He should ever be in remembrance as we consider how much we owe to His wisdom, power and grace!

—L. W.

Daily Sacrifice, April 13

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity”— Ecclesiastes 5:10.

EARTHLY possessions cannot satisfy. It is impossible to get enough of this world’s goods or its fleeting honors to quiet the yearning for more. We have all laughed over the story of the Quaker who, in order to impress this lesson upon his neighbors, put up a sign on a vacant piece of ground next to his house, which read, “I will give this lot to anyone who is really satisfied.” A wealthy farmer, as he rode by, read it. Stopping, he said, “Since my Quaker friend is going to give that piece away, I may as well have it as anyone else. I am rich. I have all I need, so I am able to qualify.” He went up to the door, and when the aged Friend appeared, explained why he had come. “And is thee really satisfied?” asked the owner of the lot. “I surely am,” was the reply. “I have all I need, and am well satisfied.” “Friend,” asked the other, “if thee is satisfied, what does thee want with my lot?” The question revealed the covetousness that was hidden in the heart.

—G. Ter Steegen.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 13

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him” —Ecclesiastes 3:14.

GOD’S Word to us, His children, is not “Yea” and “Nay,” but Yea, in Christ Jesus. When He promises nothing can change His purpose. He “will not call back His words” (Isa. 31:2). To the one who trusts Him He gives eternal life and He has declared that such shall never perish, neither shall they ever be plucked out of His hands. The believer is as secure as God Himself can make him. He is justified from all things, the recipient of a new nature and a life that can never be destroyed, and is set apart to God for eternity in all the value of the finished work of Christ.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 12

“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity” — Ecclesiastes 2:1.

“I SAID in mine heart.” This is one of the key expressions in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is the story of the effort of a man to find the supreme good, apart from divine revelation. He looks into his own heart, follows its dictates, and after trying all that earth has to offer finds all is vanity or emptiness. Worldly folly never satisfied anyone who sought it. Frivolity may captivate the senses for a moment, but it leaves regret behind. How many a devotee of pleasure has exclaimed at last, “Life is not worth living!” Solomon tried to find solace in the pleasures of the wine cup, though determined not to act the part of a fool and allow himself to become a drunkard. He would drink in moderation, hoping in this to find “what was good for the sons of men.” His book tells how vain was the effort to find lasting enjoyment in self-indulgence of any kind. He had almost unlimited wealth, and he determined not to deny himself anything that his eyes desired or his heart craved. He gave himself, for a time, at least, wholly to the pursuit of self-gratification, hoping in this to find perfect happiness. But as he looked back upon wasted years and blighted hopes he realized that the selfish life is the empty life. All was emptiness and a pursuit of the wind. Nothing under the sun can satisfy a man made for eternity.

—J. J. P.

Daily Sacrifice, April 12

“I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all” Ecclesiastes 2:14.

GODLINESS does not mean that we shall be permitted to go through life without participating in the ills that have come upon mankind because of the fall. But for Christians there is promised strength to endure, and the comfort of God to console. As one looks forward to the end of life on earth, there is the sure and glorious hope of a place with Christ in the Father’s house. Moreover, all service done for Him will be rewarded in that day when we appear at His judgment-seat—not to be judged for our sins, for that judgment took place at the cross, when our blessed Substitute bared His breast to receive the stroke that our iniquities deserved. But we shall give an account of all our service since we trusted Christ, and we shall receive reward or suffer loss according to whether we have lived to His glory or for our own pleasure.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 11

“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.... All things are full of labor, man cannot utter it, the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing” — Ecclesiastes 1:2, 8.

THE natural man finds himself caught as on a great whirling wheel, with no power to stay the controlling hand of what seems like a relentless fate. So he finds life to be all vanity and a pursuit after the wind. But the Spirit-taught believer looks up and sees an exalted Christ at God’s right hand and knows that He is, in Himself, the Wisdom of God, and so can commit his life in confidence to His loving care, and can exclaim with gladness, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

—F. C. Jennings.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 16

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days”— Ecclesiastes 11:1.

THE reference is to the Egyptian method of rice sowing—scattering the seed over the land when flooded by the waters of the Nile, counting on a bountiful harvest later on. So it is with the sower of the gospel seed. He is to be diligent in giving out the Word of Life under all circumstances, knowing that God will not let His Word return unto Him void, but will use it in the salvation of the lost and needy. Oft-times the results of faithful sowing will appear long years afterward, but in many more cases it will not be until we stand at the judgment-seat of Christ that the harvest will be manifested.

Daily Sacrifice, April 15

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment”— Ecclesiastes 11:9.

IT is a solemn thought that, although the grace of God avails to save the vilest sinner, yet nothing can ever make up the losses of a wasted life. The effects of sin remain even though the sinner is justified by faith in Christ. In the government of God there are temporal consequences of evil living which no repentance and reformation will ever undo. Therefore, the importance of turning to God in youth ere one’s influence for evil has affected others in a way that will leave eternal consequences. The only path of true blessing is that of subjection to the will of God.

—Mildred Allen Jeffery.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 15

“The labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city”—Ecclesiastes 10:15.

ALL through the Word of God one glorious city is before the eyes of His saints. It is the city for which Abraham looked, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. We see it pictured in all its magnificence in the closing chapters of the Apocalypse. The way to that city is Christ Himself. He says so plainly, “I am the Way... No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” Yet men labor on in their folly, seeking another way because they will not heed the plain message of the gospel. We are warned that, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Not a way, but the Way will bring us safely home.

G. T. S.

Daily Sacrifice, April 14

“Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!” —Ecclesiastes 10:17.

SOLOMON extols the land whose leaders set an example to the generality of the people by using God’s gifts temperately, not in giving way to gluttony or inebriation. It means much to any country when those in high station refuse to be parties to the use of intoxicants. Frivolous worldlings sneered when the Hon. William Jennings Bryan turned down his glass at a banquet, or drank the pure juice of the grape instead of wine, but his example meant a great deal to uncounted thousands who realized something of what it cost one in his position at that time to stand firmly against one of the most outstanding evils of the times.

—Clara Aiken Speer.

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