Hebrews - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, October 18

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“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” — Hebrews 10:26, 27.

JUDGMENT is God’s strange work. He delights in mercy. The cross is the supreme testimony of His grace and tells out as nothing else could His love for and interest in a lost world.

The preaching of the gospel is the appointed method of making known the heart of God to those who are arrayed in rebellion against Him. He calls upon all men everywhere to repent because He is not willing that any should perish. But if sinners perisist in refusing His grace, if they continue to spurn His offer of mercy, then there is nothing left for them but judgment, a certain fearful-looking-for of His wrath which is to devour the adversaries.

God will never have to apologize to any man for dealing thus with him if he has refused to believe the gospel. All His ways, whether of grace or of judgment are perfect, and in all His dealings with mankind He will be glorified at last.

—G. W. Frazer.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 1

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” — Hebrews 10:12-14.

THERE is no mention of a chair, or seat of any kind, for the priests in the sanctuary of old. Their work was never done, but they were constantly occupied presenting the many sacrifices offered all day long. But when our Lord Jesus had offered His own all-sufficient Sacrifice, never to be repeated, He sat down, in token that His work was done. In virtue of that propitiatory sacrifice all who are set apart to God, through faith in Him, are perfected forever. In view of this how blasphemous is the claim of the Romish priest that in the celebration of the Mass he offers a “continual unbloody sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead.” This is to ignore the perfection of Christ’s one offering on the cross which has satisfied every claim of God’s righteous throne and never needs to be repeated.

Daily Sacrifice, October 19

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” — Hebrews 11:17, 19.

GOD ever finds delight in the manifestation of implicit faith on the part of His children. It was this that was so precious in the character of Abraham. Although it took him some little time to venture out fully on the word of God, and there were occasional lapses afterward when he acted according to nature rather than in obedience to God, yet the trend of his life was that of confidence in God and obedience to His Word, even when that Word seemed to be contrary to all human experience and natural affection. In all this he becomes an example to us, bidding us receive the Word in all simplicity and act upon it in faith, however strange and difficult it may seem in the eyes of those who have never known the Lord for themselves.

Daily Sacrifice, October 20

“The time would fail me to tell of Gideon” —Hebrews 11:32.

THE outstanding lesson of Gideon’s life is that of the importance of individual faithfulness. In a day of sad declension and of in subjection to God on the part of the chosen people, Gideon stands out as one who dared to believe God and to act upon His Word. He always honors individual devotedness, no matter how dark the day and how far the public or collective testimony may have deteriorated. So today, God is looking for and using men who dare to go against the general trend of the times, who put faithfulness to His testimony above self-interest, and consequently are willing and ready to risk everything in obedience to the Word. Such can be sure that He who calls and equips them for His service will never let them down. One man with God is a host in the conflict with the embattled forces of evil.

—Jane Euphemia Saxby.

Daily Sacrifice, October 21

“Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: (of whom the world was not worthy)” — Hebrews 11:36, 38.

OF God’s devoted martyrs, or witnesses to the power of faith to enable one to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, the Holy Spirit has declared that they are numbered among those “of whom the world was not worthy.”

What a testimony of faithfulness unto death the annals of the people of God in all ages have recorded. From Abel unto the last who will ever be slain because of devotion to the Lord and His truth, it has been one long story of the power of Satan and his world arrayed against the authority of God and His saints. Evil has seemed often to be triumphant for the moment, but when the final conflict has been fought and the results are disclosed in their completeness, it will be seen that not one saint has died in vain. All will be rewarded in that day, and will reign with Christ when the prince of this world and all his minions shall come under the righteous judgment of God. They always win who side with Him.

—T. Kelly.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 2

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” —Hebrews 11:6.

FAITH is taking God at His Word. He who comes to God in prayer must believe in Him, and must have confidence that He hears the petitions addressed to Him and rewards those who earnestly seek His face. Skeptics may sneer when Christians speak of a God who answers prayer, but all the unbelievers’ sneers cannot invalidate the blessed facts which those have known who trust in Him. He chooses to give in answer to prayer what He will not give apart from prayer, in order that His people may have a positive testimony that they have to do with the living personal God. Faith honors Him, and He delights to bless those who thus acknowledge His loving care for His own. He honors them who glorify His Name.

—Croce E. Troy.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 3

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” — Hebrews 11:24-26.

LITTLE did Moses know when he made his choice what amazing consequences hung upon it. He acted for God as his conscience dictated and God gave him far more than he surrendered for His name’s sake. He renounced the throne of Egypt where Providence seemed to have placed him, in order to become a desert wanderer. But God made him the leader of a mighty people and gave him such privileges as none had ever known before him. Nor was it a forced choice on Moses’ part. That expression “choosing rather” tells how he weighed one thing against another and counted the cost; only to decide for a present path of affliction with the Lord’s favor rather than a comparatively easy life in disobedience to the divine voice; may it be ours to emulate him in all this.

—W. Trotter.

Daily Sacrifice, October 22

“Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven” — Hebrews 12:26.

ARE we so walking with God that we can go on in trustful confidence even though we know this world and its Christless religion will soon pass away? Everything that men generally look upon as stable and secure is destined to be shaken to pieces and utterly destroyed. He whose hopes are centered only in earthly things is destined to a terrible awakening when he shall behold all for which he has lived and labored, slipping from his grasp, and he himself going down with it unto eternal ruin. But he who knows Christ and sets his affection on things above will have that which will abide “in the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.” The believing heart is fixed upon God Himself and upon those things which cannot be shaken but shall abide forever.

How short-sighted is the man who in his eagerness to accumulate wealth puts all his money in bags that have holes, and builds his house upon the shifting sands of time! He only is wise whose treasure is in heaven and who builds upon Christ the Rock of Ages.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 4

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made

perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" — Hebrews 12:22-24.

IN the latter part of this twelfth chapter of Hebrews we have law and grace set before us in vivid contrast as two distinct circles, one centering in Sinai, "the mount that burned with fire," and the other in Mt. Sion, which speaks of God's sovereign grace. Linked with this is the heavenly instead of the earthly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, where dwell an innumerable company, a full gathering of angel hosts, whose delight it is to serve those who belong to the assembly of first-born ones—all heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. There God Himself dwells, and there, too, Old Testament saints, now perfected through the work of Jesus, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, whose blood speaks not of vengeance but of mercy. This is the circle of God's favor to which all believers have come.

— J. G. Deck.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 5

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" —Hebrews 13:20, 21.

THE Shepherd character of our Lord Jesus suggests loving care for His own. He is Jehovah Ra'ah, "the Lord my Shepherd," who takes complete charge of His sheep, and undertakes to provide for their every need. He has given us many pictures of His shepherd-service. As the Good Shepherd He died for us (John 10). As the Great Shepherd He is ever watching over us. As the Chief Shepherd He will gather us all about Himself when He comes again (1 Peter 5). His promises are sufficient for every difficulty. Yet in times of stress we forget them all, and worry and fret as though we had to meet all our problems ourselves, instead of trusting to His love and wisdom to undertake for us. He has promised to see us through.

When the Lord has the supreme place in our hearts—not simply the first place—we will not fear all the power of the enemy, for He to whom we have committed the keeping of our souls is more than a match for all that may rise up against us. In all His ways with us He is the unfailing Shepherd, having our best interests in view. His glory and our blessing are indissolubly linked together.

—Mrs. Wellesley.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 7. The Priesthood of All Believers

Text: "By him therefore let us oiler the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. 13:15, 16).

THE thought of a distinct priesthood of a certain class separated from their brethren and occupying a peculiar place of nearness to God is utterly foreign to the New Testament. All believers are designated priests in this dispensation. In Revelation 1:6, the apostle says that He "hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father," and the us there clearly takes in all the redeemed family in this wonderful dispensation of grace. The apostle Peter, too, tells us that we are "holy priests" and "royal priests;" and he was not speaking of any special grace resting upon the apostolic company or upon any peculiar class set apart to some sacerdotal office, but he spoke of all believers. He says that we are holy and royal priests, and Paul, who I believe was the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, tells us that we are to offer up "spiritual sacrifices."

Sacrificing is a priestly function. In Old Testament times, the people of God were divided into three classes; there were some priests others ministers or Levites and the rest were warriors. There were those especially set apart as worshipers and others as ministers on behalf of God to His people. The priest, you see, goes in to God on behalf of the people; the Levite goes out to the people on behalf of God. Then there were those who were called upon to contend for the rights of the people of God and for the glory of God—they were warriors. However, in the New Testament dispensation every believer is a warrior; we are all called upon to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," (Jude 3). Every believer is also a minister; we all have some gift, and "as every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). We are called upon to labor for the blessing of a lost world. Then, thirdly, we are all priests; we are all worshipers, and it is the privilege of each one of us to enter where the ordinary priests of old never could enter, into the holiest, where we come in all the infinite value of the precious atoning blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now worship is the very highest exercise of the human spirit, but it is that of which we know the least and to which most of us give the least attention. We all know what it means to fight for the Truth, to contend for the Word. I take it that most of us realize the tremendous responsibility resting upon us in these days of declension and apostasy to stand firmly for the Truth of God, to be ready to defend that Truth even if it should mean to lay down our lives for it. We know something of real ministry, to serve our brethren or to serve by carrying the Gospel to the world. But some of us, I fear, imagine that when we have stood valiantly for the Truth and ministered to the needs of others, that is about all that Gad is looking for from us. He said to the woman at the well. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), "for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4:23). Have you ever thought very much about that?

You recall that wonderful word in Luke 19:10: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Our blessed Lord, a Seeker! and whom is He seeking? He is seeking after lost men and women to bring them to the knowledge of redemption. And where does He seek? Out in the world, everywhere wherever man is found. But now we see that God the Father is a Seeker. For whom is He seeking? The Father seeketh worshipers. And where does He go to seek worshipers? Out into the wide world? Oh, no! Men talk, you know, about public worship. Why, the public cannot worship; the greater part of the public are lost sinners trampling on the Saviour's blood and going on to endless judgment. They are not worshipers. It is not out in the world where the Father is looking for worshipers; but where does He look? Among the

redeemed! When people have been washed from their sins in the precious blood of Christ; when they have been cleansed from sin's pollution, then, think of it, among them the Father is seeking worshipers! After all, there are so few even of the blood washed who rise to the height of their privileges and responsibilities and take their rightful place as priests before God.

You know the priest is the worshiper. Men are often content when they come into what is called a religious service to let the man in the pulpit do the praying and the preaching, and the choir do the singing, and they just sit and look on and then go away and say, "We have been worshiping God," and perhaps all the time God was seeking all through that audience for worshipers and hardly finding any.

You remember the ten lepers that came to Christ in their need, pleading that they might be healed. He said, "Go your way to the priest and offer the sacrifice." What was the meaning of that? In Leviticus 13 and 14, where we have the regulations in regard to leprosy, we are told that when a leper was cleansed, he was to go and show himself to the priest. But do you realize that in all the fifteen hundred years that had rolled by since God had inspired Moses to write those chapters, there is no record that they had ever been acted upon? No man at any time ever came to a priest in Israel and said, "See, I was a leper, but I have been healed and I have brought my sacrifice." So that part of the law of God had become a dead letter to the priests in Israel; but how astonished they must have been when the people began coming, first one and then another, and said, "I want you to examine me; I have been a leper for years but I have been healed and I have come to bring the sacrifice." I fancy some of the priests must have been greatly perturbed I fancy some of them were so astonished that they did not know what to do. They probably went back to consult the Book, as they said, "Why, we have never heard of this before; of course it is in the Bible but we have had no occasion to look into this particular instruction. Who healed you?" They would ask. And to their amazement and perhaps chagrin, the answer would come, "Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth; He touched me and made me whole and I have come to bring the offering according to the law."

What a wonderful thing that was those ten lepers pleaded that they might be healed, and Jesus said, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." What did that mean? Here they were covered with leprosy. "Well," one might say, "He told us to go and He must mean that by the time we get there everything will be all right," and so they had faith enough to go, and they were healed.

But one of the lepers suddenly felt a strange sensation come over him and he looked at his hands and said, "My word! I have not seen my hands look like that for years, these hands that were so covered with leprosy. Did you notice anything different about me?" "Why," they might have said, "you were never so good looking in your life. We are healed; we are well; the leprosy is gone!" And nine of them went off to the temple in accordance with the Word, but one of them, a Samaritan, said, "Why should I go to that temple; there is one here greater than the temple. I am going back to Him," and back he went and fell down at the feet of the blessed Lord, a worshiper—a worshiper! Do you get that? He fell down to adore, to bless, to thank the One who had healed him, and how the heart of Jesus was touched as He exclaimed, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that return to give glory to God, save this stranger" (Luke 17:17 and 18).

This is the picture of a worshiper, and that is what the priest is, and when the Word of God tells us that we are all priests, it means that we are all set apart as worshipers.

After Aaron and his sons were first thus consecrated ever son in their families was born a priest. And dear friends, there is no ordinance or ceremonial service that will make a priest of you today; you must be born a priest. "But," you say, "it is all up with me then; for I was born into an ungodly family." Oh, but that is where the Word of the Lord comes in. "Ye must be born again," and when you are born the second time, you are born into the priestly family. Aaron was at the head of his family and all his sons were called "his house." Now Christ is the head of the priestly family today, and all who receive life through Christ are called "His house."

But before the priest could enter upon his service there were certain ceremonies through which he had to go. First, he was brought to the door of the tabernacle; and that is typical. Jesus says, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). The priest is a man who has a personal acquaintance with Christ. Dear friend, do you know Him, that blessed One who is the way into the very presence of God and who says, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me"? Come to the Door!

Next, he was stripped of all his secular garments; and for every one of us there has to be the stripping. Saul of Tarsus, in his unconverted days, thought he was well-dressed. In Philippians 3, he tells us of the many things in which he used to glory and then when he had a vision of the Saviour, and stripping took place. "What things were gain to me," he says, "those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7). Some of us remember when we labored pretty hard to get "well-dressed" in order to fit ourselves for God. We did not like forswearing all these things but when Christ filled the vision of our soul, then we could say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). You know, Paul says that I may "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

I was talking to a large group at a college one day and an illustration came to my mind which will probably not fit you quite so well. I said, "Just imagine one of you girls working your way through college. You have very little with which to do; your parents are not able to provide for you; possibly you have no parents. There is going to be some great affair and all are supposed to be nicely dressed for this occasion and you do not Like to be shabby, but you have so little to go on. Then you see that at the five and ten cent store, there is a splendid sale on material for ten cents a yard. You have only a few dimes but you go down and get a few yards and try to make a nice little gown so that you can go to that function. But you have never had much training as a seamstress and you have a lot of trouble. However, you work away on it trying to make it look respectable. Then one day Lady Bountiful visits you; you have always dreamed about her but never expected to see her. She takes a kindly interest in you and says, 'Look, I want you to go down town with me.' You go, wondering why she should be interested in you, and then she takes you into one of the most beautiful establishments of the city. You are stirred as you walk up and down those aisles, and as she stops at the dress section, she says, 'Now, my dear, pick out any dress you please; a gown for yourself, any one that you like.' 'Well, really,' you say, 'that seems too good to be true, I am afraid my taste would lead my to pick out something too expensive.' But she says, 'Go right on—anything you want.' And so your fancy for color leads you to select a certain one and you say, 'Well, I think that would be very becoming.' 'All right,' she says, and to the saleslady, 'How much is it?' The answer is, $75.00. 'Oh,' you say, 'that is altogether beyond a poor girl like me.' But that is all right, you like it and you are going to have it.' Imagine the girl coming back to her little room seeing the poor old figured goods at which she had been working so long. She gets the new one out and tries it on and parades up and down before the glass. Finally she calls in the others girls and says, 'Oh, now I shall be found not having my own dress, this poor inexpensive thing, but this beautiful gown, that has been given to me so freely!'" Do you see it?

Paul looked at it that way. He had been trying to work out his righteousness himself, trying to make a beautiful garment in which to stand before God; but when he got sight of the risen Christ, and learned that every believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ, he said, “Away with that thing of my own providing, now that I can be dressed up in the righteousness which is of God in Christ.”

Yes, we have to be stripped, but before we put on the new clothes there is something more. We find the priests were bathed all over. That speaks of cleansing, every whit. When I come to the place where I am willing to let go my own righteousness and put my trust in Christ, I am washed from every sin stain and made clean. “Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). The Word tells me of atoning blood shed for my sins on Calvary’s tree— “And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). I am not only made clean but I am clothed; now it is that God puts upon me this robe, a divine righteousness, and I can exclaim with Isaiah, “He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10).

Now I am ready to enter upon my office as a priest. What do I do? The priest was a worshiper. Of old he offered sacrifice for sin, but we have no sacrifice for sin to offer because our great High Priest settled that when He offered up Himself. But what do I offer now? The priest offered the gifts of a grateful people as well. The people came bringing their gifts, and he presented them before the Lord, and so you and I come bringing our gifts. “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.” (Heb. 13:15).

Did you ever notice that rather odd expression in one of the minor prophets, “By Thee will we offer the calves of our lips”? The people of old presented their cattle to God but the prophet looking on into the future sees that we will have no calf to burn but exclaims, “We will offer the ‘calves of our lips.’” We are coming to God pleading the infinite value of the Lord Jesus and praising Him for the grace that led Him to stoop so low as to save us. We bring Christ to God as the praise of our hearts.

In Deuteronomy 26 there is a lovely picture. When the people of Israel came into the land, they were to take a basket of the first-fruits and set it down before the Lord; and the priest (you see they could not go any further), was to bring it in and set it in the presence of the Lord and the people were to confess that they themselves were poor sinners but God had dealt with them in loving kindness. And so we come today bringing our baskets of first-fruits.

And Christ Himself is the “first-fruits” we are told. He is the sample sheaf of the coming great harvest. We shall all be like Him some day. Meantime we come to God bringing to Him the One in whom He delights and we now delight in Him too.

But now it is not just this one side. Peter says that we are holy priests and royal priests. “Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5), that is, to offer the praises of thanksgiving, of adoration to God “acceptable by Christ Jesus.” And that is not all.

He not only says we are holy priests, (not in any holiness of our own) but in 1 Peter 2:9 he says, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should Show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” As a holy priest I go in to God to worship; as a royal priest (linked up with my Melchizedec Priest-King), I go out before men to show forth the praises of Him who has called me “out of darkness into His marvelous light.” And how do I do that? By manifesting Christ to men. I bring Christ to God and come into His presence as a worshiper with a heart enraptured with Christ, and then I take Christ out to men and show to others what God has given me.

First, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15). Now look at the other side, “But to do good and to communicate (to share what you have with others whether in things spiritual or temporal) forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. 13:16).

Thus, we have the two sides to our worship. We honor God by offering the sacrifice of praise through Christ. We prove that we are true worshipers by manifesting the love of God to those in need.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 8. The Presentation of First Fruits

A Thanksgiving Day Sermon

Text: “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (Heb. 13:15, 16).

Deuteronomy 26 was read as a scripture lesson. If our readers will open their Bibles to that chapter and keep it before them, they will follow the sermon with greater clearness.

IN THIS twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy we have what undoubtedly gave rise to the Puritans’ harvest home festival. It was Israel’s national Thanksgiving Day and most suggestive of that which should occupy our hearts at this present time. You will notice the chapter is divided into two parts. In verse 1 to 11, the people are seen bringing the first fruits to God and rejoicing before Him as they give thanks for all the mercies of the past year. In verse 12 to 19, the same people are seen ministering to the Levites, the strangers, the fatherless, and the widows, and to all who are poor and needy among them, and by these acts of consideration for their less fortunate fellowmen and for the servants of the Lord, who were largely dependent upon their bounty, we see evidences of grace working in their souls, and can understand something of what our own attitude ought to be when, blessed ourselves, we look upon a vast host who are suffering for the lack of what God has so graciously lavished upon us.

These two divisions of this great chapter answer to the two aspects of sacrifice brought before us in our text. In verse 15, we have the sacrifice of praise to God; the fruit of lips that confess the name of Jesus. Whereas in verse 16, we have the sacrifice of ministering to those in need; doing good and sharing with others what God has given to us.

This sacrifice of praise can be presented to God only by those who are in happy relationship with Himself. None but redeemed people can come into His holy presence as worshipers. Worship is not merely the observance of some religious ceremony; neither does it consist in listening to a sermon nor in presenting our petitions in prayer. It is a great mistake to think of worship as the enjoyment of soulful and beautiful music. Carnal and even unconverted people may have their sentimental natures thoroughly aroused by the dulcet strains of the organ or by the sweet singing of a trained choir. But this enjoyment does not necessarily imply that the spirit is worshiping God in reality. Our Lord Himself said to the Samaritan woman, “God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” The highest worship is when the saint of God enters by faith into the holiest, passing through the rent veil and prostrating himself before the throne of the eternal, there to gaze with adoring love and gratitude upon our blessed Lord Jesus Christ who now sits exalted on the Father’s throne. There can be no true warship apart from our occupation with Himself. Outward observances may often hinder rather than help because there is ever the danger of distracting the mind, of fixing the attention upon some religious performance instead of on Christ Himself. It is when the spit enters into the stillness, the quiet of God’s own presence, there to be overwhelmed with a sense of the dine holiness and the divine love as manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we really worship.

And this is pictured for us very beautifully in these first eleven verses of this Old Testament chapter. We read in verses 1 and 2: “And it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwellest therein: That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there.” Observe this was something that could never be carried out in the wilderness and certainly not in Egypt. God says, “When thou shalt come in unto the land.” As a redeemed people, redeemed by blood and redeemed by power, dwelling in the inheritance which God had given them, the Israel it’s were called to observe this festival. No unsaved person, no one who is still in nature’s darkness and in bondage of sin and Satan, no one who has not been washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus and raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ can be a true worshiper. Men often speak of public worship, but this is a mistake. The public cannot worship. Worship is a very selective thing, and it is the glad privilege of those who are complete in Christ.

Now notice the form their service was to take. They were commanded to bring the first fruits of the land which the Lord had given them; to put it in a basket; and to go to the place where the Lord has chosen to set His name. How significant all this is. The first fruits speak of Christ Himself even as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.” Again in verse 23: “Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” The first fruits tell of the great harvest soon to be gathered in, even as a Risen Christ has entered into the presence of God as our forerunner, the pledge of the great ingathering when millions of the redeemed will be transformed and translated at the moment of His return.

The basket may well speak of our poor hearts, straitened indeed as we often are in ourselves, and yet in which Christ is pleased to dwell, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” We come to God with a heart filled with Christ, thinking of Him, praising Him, occupied alone with Him, rejoicing Jesus Christ and having no confidence in the flesh. How God delights to see His people thus before Him.

I was trying to expound this passage some years ago and there was a dear little golden haired girl in the service. On the way home she said to her father, “Daddy dear, I didn’t have anything in my basket for the Lord today.” Thinking she had not understood, the father said, “Well, Flossy, what do you mean?” “I was so busy,” she said, “going to school and playing that I didn’t put anything in my basket.” “You didn’t?” the father asked, still not sure that she had understood. “No,” she said, and walked along silently for a few moments, and then said, “Daddy, I am going to have my basket full by next Sunday.” “How are you going to get it full?” her father asked. “Every day,” said the little one, “I am going to stop playing for a little while and think of Jesus and I think by Sunday I will have it full.” “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise” (Matt. 21:16). Yes, a heart filled with Christ, that constitutes a worshiper.

Of old there was only one place where the first fruits could be presented and that was at the place where God had set His name, where the tabernacle had been pitched or later on the temple built, and where He dwelt between the cherubim. Now it is to no earthly sanctuary we are invited to come, but the word is “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh: And having an high priest over the house of God: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22). Neither in Jerusalem, nor in some temple on a Samaritan mountain do we find God, but as a spiritual people, we enter in spirit into His immediate presence and there present our first fruits.

Accompanied with the presentation, we have the confession as in verse 3: “And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come into the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us.” It was a recognition and an acknowledgement of the fact that there had not failed one word of all God’s good promise. And so today as a worshiping company, we gladly confess that we have by faith entered into the inheritance which is ours in Christ. The priest is another picture of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. We read, “The priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. “It is our great High Priest who presents to God our worship and praises and it is His perfection which alone can make our feeble adoration acceptable to the Father.

No thought of merit was to be in the mind of the Israelite and surely there can be none with us. We are saved by grace apart from works, and so have nothing of which to boast. Their confession was most abject. “A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: And we cried unto the Lord God of our father, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction and our labor, and our oppression: And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God (Deut. 26:6-10).

What an acknowledgment was this that they owed every blessing to divine grace. They merited nothing, they purchased nothing, but all came to them through the wondrous loving kindness of the Lord. And so in response to that matchless mercy, they brought the first fruits and set them down before Him, rejoicing in His presence because of all the good things He had lavished upon them. Shall we not emulate them this morning as we think of a nobler inheritance, a greater deliverance, and a more marvelous exhibition of dine grace than they ever dreamed of

all ours in Christ Jesus? Surely we can rejoice in Him today and offer the fruit of lips that confess His name.

But what about the needy all around us? The spiritually needy and the temporally needy also? We have been blessed in Christ; and concerning earthly things, we are told, “He hath given us all things richly to enjoy.” But at our very doors are those who know nothing of the grace of God revealed in Christ. All about us are those who are suffering for lack of the everyday mercies that mean so much to us. God has given us an example in His further commandment to Israel of what His pleasure is in regard to this. We read in verse 12 to 14: “When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.” Here was grace in activity; here was love manifested. Here was the kindness of God seen in His people as they ministered to the need of others. In Hebrews 13:16, we have the same thing where God says, “And to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” He would not have those who have been so richly blessed forget the needs of others, and I am sure that no one who truly enjoys Christ can help telling of Him to men and women who are still strangers to His grace. And as we thank God today for the temporal mercies He has lavished upon us, our enjoyment will be the greater as we share these good things with those whose circumstances are not so agreeable as ours, passing on to them what will brighten their lives and gladden their hearts in the name of Him who said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

You have heard of the old gentleman who was so pious, that all through the church service he would sit with enraptured face looking up to heaven, but when they passed the collection plate, he closed his eyes so as not to be disturbed in his meditation. Dear friends, spirituality is manifested just as truly in sharing with others what God has entrusted to us; whether it is making known the Gospel or giving to others that which would alleviate their distress. “But whosoever seeth his brother in need and says, ‘Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled’; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:16). You see, as priestly believers we are called upon to present our sacrifice of praise to God, and our sacrifice of giving to the world outside. May we truly enter into the responsibilities and the privileges of our priesthood, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified.

Daily Sacrifice, October 14

“But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou had loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” — Hebrews 1:8, 9.

IT is the Father who is addressing the Son and owns Him as eternally One with Himself in reigning over the universe. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, we hear one Person of the Holy Trinity addressing another—yet both alike over all blessed forever. The quotation is from Psalms 45:6. In the seventh verse of the same Psalm, it is His Manhood that is in view. He who is God became Man without ceasing to be God, and as Man He has companions. But He must ever be supreme; His the special anointing that marks Him out as the sinless Christ (anointed) of God.

—Charles Wesley.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 24

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” — Hebrews 1:1-3.

HAVE you ever wished you understood God better? Have you wondered just how He viewed many things that you are faced with in this scene of testing? Then all you need to do is to get better acquainted with the Lord Jesus, for in Him God is perfectly told out. He is the effulgence of His glory; the exact expression of His character. So He could say, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” He is God’s last word to man. In times past His revelations were fragmentary through inspired prophets. Now He has come out to us in the Person of His Son, His Heir and the Creator of the Ages. This One has made purification for sins, and He has taken His place as Man on the Father’s right hand. In Him we see God.

—J. G. Deck.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 25

“For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” —Hebrews 2:18.

THE perfection of Christ’s humanity was demonstrated by His temptation as it could not have been manifested in any other way. Adam, the first, was tested in a garden of beauty surrounded by every blessing, and he fell by yielding to the tempter’s voice. Adam, the second, was tried in a wilderness among the wild beasts, with all nature apparently arrayed against Him, yet He stood like a rock—invulnerable and impeccable—because He was God manifest in flesh. His temptation was like exposing the gold to the acid test—not to find out if it is a

precious metal, but to prove that it is really gold and not base metal gilded. Yet the temptation was very real to Jesus. “He... suffered being tempted” (Heb. 2:18). To be brought into such close contact with sin was so revolting it caused Him keenest suffering, because of the purity of His human nature, undefiled by Adamic corruption. We suffer as we resist temptation and so cease from sin (1 Peter 4:1). In this we may see the contrast between ourselves and Him. But having thus been exposed to all that has wrought such havoc in our frail humanity, He, our ever faithful High Priest, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and stands ready to render help in every hour of need. We are not left to fight our battles alone. He lives to be our victory.

—Isaac Watts.

Daily Sacrifice, October 15

“We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” — Hebrews 4:15.

THERE has never appeared on earth another who so thoroughly entered into all human distresses and understood all the perplexities that trouble the minds of men, as the Lord Jesus Christ. None else could fathom the depths of human hearts as He, who was God and Man in one blessed, adorable Person. He did not need to study men. He knew them intuitively. He knew their thoughts and anticipated all their problems. And so today He remains the one unchanging Christ, who can minister to men in every circumstance. He binds up broken hearts, heals sin-sick souls, and meets every demand of the most exacting searcher after ultimate truth. He is Himself “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Men speak sometimes of “the problem of Jesus.” He is not a problem. He is the solution to every problem.

—Hugh Miller.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 26

“We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” — Heb. 4:16.

THE temptation of Jesus was not to see whether He would fail. It was rather to prove that He would not. The temptation by Satan but made evident the holiness and strength of the Second Man in contrast to the weakness and failure of the first.

In considering the temptation, it is important to remember that Jesus did not cease to be God when He became Man. He is God and Man in one glorious person. This the temptation was designed to make evident. He could ever say, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). There was no traitor within as there is in us. He was ever the sinless One, as Satan himself proved when he retired, defeated from the conflict.

An old Welsh collier, who taught a Bible class, gave his young men full liberty to discuss all Biblical problems, but often cautioned them with the advice, “Whatever else ye do, lads, keep the character of God clear.” So in considering the holy and mysterious theme of our Lord’s temptation we may well bear his words in mind, and refer them to the blessed Saviour. Be sure to keep the character of Jesus clear. If He were not the sinless, unblemished Lamb of God, He would have needed a Deliverer Himself and could not have saved us (2 Cor. 5:21).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 27

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” — Hebrews 4:16.

ABUNDANT provision has been made to meet all our needs, temporal or spiritual, and we are invited to come with boldness to the throne where our great High Priest sits exalted, to make known our requests, not only (nor even primarily) for ourselves alone, but for others in whom we are interested. We little realize the power of earnest believing prayer. God delights to give in answer to our supplications many blessings which we shall miss if we neglect thus to call upon Him. He has chosen to meet our needs in this way because of the sanctifying influence of the hour of prayer upon our own souls and because of the proofs He can thus give that we have to do with a personal God who cares for us and loves to minister to us.

—Adelaide A. Pollard.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 28

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have chewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” —Heb. 6:10.

WHILE works of mercy and care for others are not a procuring cause of salvation, they do manifest the activity of the new nature when carried out in and for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He went about doing good, and in this as in all else He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Unselfish service for His glory is an acceptable sacrifice well-pleasing in His sight.

—Madeline S. Bridges.

Daily Sacrifice, October 16

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” — Hebrews 7:25.

THE work of redemption was finished upon the cross.

The ministry of intercession has been carried on ever since our Lord returned to the Father. He bears up before God all His own, even as the high priest of old bore the names of all Israel on his heart (Ex. 28:15-29) and on his shoulders (Ex. 28:9-12) when he went into the Holy Place to offer the pure incense, which speaks of prayer (Psa. 141:2). This intercessory work is for the purpose of maintaining and sustaining His people in their testimony for God, as they pass through this adverse scene, in which they are strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). It is precious to realize that He ever prays for even the feeblest of His saints, and enters into all their trials and sorrows as they journey on to the home above.

—Charles Wesley

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 29

“In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” — Hebrews 8:13.

THE old covenant was the testing of man, through the nation that God had selected from all others as the recipient of His special favor. Their failure proved the incorrigibility of all mankind (Rom. 3:19). Now all are alike shown to be under sin. Hence, there can be no salvation for any apart from the direct operation of God’s Spirit upon the heart of man, acting in sovereign grace. This is the blessing of the new covenant. God is now the Worker—not man. He is the only contracting party. He gives freely, to all who are willing to receive, the riches of His mercy in Christ Jesus. He imparts divine life to the believer, and with this life is linked a new and a divine nature which delights in that which pleases God.

—Mary Bowley.

Daily Sacrifice, October 17

“For this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” — Hebrews 9:15.

THE Old Covenant is that of law. It asked of man what he in his unregenerated condition could not give: a perfect obedience to and love for a holy, sin-hating God. The New Covenant is that of grace. It proclaims God’s remedy for man’s wretched condition and offers life, not as a result of what man may do for God, but because of what God in Christ has done for man. The law said in effect: “Do and live.” Grace says: “Live and do.” Under the New Testament God offers forgiveness to all who trust in Christ on the basis of the blood of the covenant, that blood which was shed on Calvary. His work avails not only for believers since the cross, but for those of past ages as well. To each believer is given a new nature. The law is written upon the heart, As a result it becomes a joy and delight to the renewed soul to walk in obedience to God, and so “the righteousness of the law” is “fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

—A. P. Cecil.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, November 30

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” —Hebrews 9:13, 14.

THE law knew nothing of a purged conscience. The sacrifices of the Levitical economy were designed to ease the conscience but they could not purify it. Every sin required a new offering, for there was not intrinsic value in the blood of beasts to actually settle the sin-question. Outwardly there was purification, fitting one to enter the earthly sanctuary. Inwardly there was no cleansing such as is ours now in virtue of the precious blood of Christ shed for us upon the cross. Dead works are those performed by dead sinners—from these, as from evil works, the conscience needs to be purged. The blood of Christ alone can avail for this. That blood is sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The veil is rent, and man may now draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith.

—J. G. Deck.

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