James - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, October 23

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“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”— James 1:21, 22.

THE Epistle of James occupies a unique place in the New Testament. It is addressed specifically to the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus it is God’s last message in this age to Israel as such. But this does not mean that it is not for all the children of God. It abounds in practical truth which rises above all dispensational distinctions. Closely allied in substance to the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, which was primarily addressed to the disciples as waiting for the setting up of the kingdom, it stresses the behavior that should ever characterize those who own Jesus Christ as the anointed Saviour, while waiting for His return.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 6

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” —James 1:17.

GOD is the Source of all good. Every blessing we enjoy comes down from Him. He is the Father of lights, who is unchanging in His love and grace, and in whose dealings with us there is “no shadow cast by turning,” as the last, part of this verse has been translated. His face is ever toward us. In all circumstances we may go to Him in perfect confidence assured of a welcome and a sympathetic ear as we tell Him all that troubles and perplexes us. It Isaiah His joy to undertake for us. He delights to lavish His rood and perfect gifts upon His obedient children. If He seems to withhold it is because He has some better thing or us, or because we need to judge something His holy eye has detected in our ways which makes it necessary to treat is with reserve. When all is right He gives without stint an answer to our prayer.

—J. Denson Smith.

Daily Sacrifice, October 24

“If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well” —James 2:8.

IT is a great mistake to confound divine love with mere human sentimentality. Love is only genuine when it makes one willing to sacrifice for the sake of the objects of its affection. The love of God led Him to give His Son—His Only-begotten—for the salvation of a sinful world. The love of Christ led Him to Calvary, there to die in order to redeem us to God. The love of the Spirit moves believers to unselfish devotion to the Lord and sacrificial service on behalf of a lost world. This is the real motive power that keeps Christ’s great missionary enterprise going constrained by love, men and women gladly exchange the ease and comforts of home life in this favored land, for the hardships and self-denying labors of the mission-field. The same love leads to patient endurance of trial and sorrow and the sharing of the griefs of our brethren here in the homeland.

—Edith Goreham.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 7

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” —James 2:14.

EMPTY profession is of no profit. He who speaks of faith in Christ is responsible to manifest it by his renewed life. In Romans we learn that we are justified before God by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. In James 2 we are taught that we are justified before men by works, works that are the fruit of a living faith, which is manifest to all. Abraham was justified by faith when he believed God, who spoke of the coming Seed, our Lord Jesus Christ. He was justified by works, when in obedience to the voice of God he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar. Thus faith wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect. So it must be with us. If we believe God we will yield obedience to His Word, and so our faith will be manifested.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 8

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”— James 3:17, 18.

EARTHLY principles will not do as guidance for heavenly men. The wisdom of this world is utterly opposed to the wisdom of heaven which is manifested in all perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ. Human philosophies center in self. The wisdom that comes from above centers in God as revealed in His Son. It is first pure. The pure in heart see Him who is its Source. Impurity blinds the eyes of the heart. “Peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated,” this divine wisdom is “full of mercy and good fruits.” It knows nothing of respect of persons and it is downright honest. There is no two-facedness in it. He who walks according to wisdom walks in righteousness and his life is a testimony to its power to produce all manner of goodness and peace.

—Lady Campbell.

Daily Sacrifice, October 25

“Ye have not, because ye ask not”— James 4:2.

WHY pray at all? It is often said by some who attempt to be wiser than God’s Word, that prayer in the sense of asking of Him is not only unnecessary, but foolish. We are told that prayer changes nothing, and that it is absurd to suppose our asking can in any way affect God’s giving. But Scripture shows us that God has chosen to give, in answer to prayer, many things that He will not give apart from prayer, in order that we may have continual evidence that we have to do with a living God and that our souls may be drawn into communion with Himself.

—Old English Verse.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 9

“But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” —James 4:6.

THERE is nothing to which the human heart is so prone as pride, and that in creatures who have nothing to be proud of! Our manifold sins might well humble us to the lowest depths, yet this evil root persists even in the most devoted saints. A Paul needed a thorn in the flesh lest he be exalted above measure. A David insisted on numbering the people for his own glory. A Peter became lifted up when blessed with special spiritual illumination. By this sin fell Lucifer and carried the third of the angels of heaven with him, and its virus has infected the whole human race since Eve was seduced by it in Eden. Christ is our supreme example of humility, His was a meekness that never exalted Himself but sought alone the glory of God. May we follow His steps in this as in all else.

—J. Danson Smith.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, December 10

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” —James 5:17,18.

SALUTARY indeed are the lessons which the Holy Spirit has presented for us in the record of Elijah’s life. In some respects, the greatest of all the prophets since Moses, until the advent of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11), he appears suddenly upon the page of Scripture with his amazing declaration to King Ahab, “As the Lord... liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). This was the result of, and confidence derived from, a life of prayer. He had learned how to prevail with God, and his prayer shut and opened the heavens in accordance with the will of the Lord. This is most suggestive. Prayer does not cause God to change His mind. But the man who lives in fellowship with Him is guided to pray in accordance with His will. Such prayer is sure to be answered (1 John 5:14, 15).

We must learn to know God in secret if we would be courageous for Him in public. The three years that Elijah spent in retirement, proving God’s faithfulness by the brook Cherith and in the widow’s home at Zarephath, gave him a background of practical experience that was of inestimable value when he had to face Ahab and the prophets of Baal. It was because he knew God that he dared to witness for Him so boldly.

—Annie Johnson Flint.

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