Mark - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 5

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“And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part” —Mark 9:38-40.

IT IS a great thing to learn that each servant of Christ must act individually as before the Lord, and yet, on the other hand, that he is responsible to co-operate with his fellow-servants so far as possible, without seeking to control or dictate to them.

We are always prone to forget that we are not to judge one another, but to remember that each one stands or falls to his own master (Rom. 14:4). But this should not make us self-centered and disinterested in the work of others. The trials of our fellow-servants should move us to prayer on their behalf, and their victories should cause us to rejoice. We cannot properly appraise even our work now, let alone that of our brethren, but all will come out “in that day” (1 Cor. 4:1-5).

It seemed hard for our Lord’s disciples to learn these things, and it is evident that few of us have learned them today. We are so apt to over-estimate the importance of our own ministry and to under-value the work of our fellow-servants. This is a subtle form of pride which is most hateful to God, and most harmful to the work of the Lord.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 4

“This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting” — Mark 9:29.

BACK of all effective service there must ever be a life of prayer. It is only as we ourselves are in touch with God that we can be channels through which divine power and blessing will flow forth to others.

No amount of activity, nor of sincere desire to help, can make up for lack of communion with God. Of old the Levites, who represented ministry, waited on the priesthood, which speaks of worship (Num. 3:9, 10). “This kind goeth not out but by prayer.” Prayer is the recognition of our own helplessness and our appropriation of divine energy, which works in and through the self-judged, obedient believer to the glory and praise of God. This, too, is true fasting—the denial of self and ceasing from all fleshly confidence.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 3

“Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” —Mark 9:1.

AFTER six days, or as Luke puts it, “about an eight days after” (Luke 9:28), that is, on the night of the eighth day, which began according to Jewish reckoning at sunset, and therefore followed the seventh day, including that on which the Lord Jesus Christ gave this prediction, the transfiguration took place.

Peter, who was present on that memorable occasion, tells us that it was then “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” was portrayed. In other words, it was the manifestation of the kingdom of God in embryo (2 Peter 1:10-21).

The King Himself was there in His glory and majesty. The Father’s voice acclaimed His perfections and called on all men to “hear Him.” There appeared with Him in the same glory two archetypal men: one who had passed through death, the other who had been caught up alive into Heaven. These pictured the heavenly side of the kingdom. The disciples in their natural bodies pictured those on earth, basking in the sunlight of Messiah’s presence. It was a momentary glimpse of the kingdom to be set up when Christ returns in power to reign.

With such a vision before their souls, the disciples could well afford to count all things else but loss that they might have part with Him in that day.

—Robert R Pentecost.

Daily Sacrifice, June 26

“He took a child, and set him in the midst of them and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me”—Mark 9:36, 37.

BECAUSE of their confiding trust and guileless simplicity, little children were recognized by the Lord Jesus Christ as the ideal subjects of the kingdom of heaven. It was a child whom He called and set in the midst as an illustration to His disciples of what His followers should be. Notice the order. Jesus called. The child came. He was placed in the midst. To hear His voice, to obey His Word, and to trust His grace is to insure recognition from the Lord of heaven. Pride, which is so natural to sinners, who have nothing to be proud of, is hateful to God. “Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off” (Psa. 138:6). Our colored friends are right when they sing:

—Negro Spiritual.

Daily Sacrifice, June 25

“After six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them. And His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus”— Mark 9:2-4.

ON the mount, the disciples were taken into God’s confidence and given a foreview of the kingdom to be ushered in with power and glory at our Lord’s second advent. In the plain, they beheld anew something of the ravages of sin and Satan, under which this poor world suffers and groans still, and from which it will only be freed completely when Christ returns. But all down through the present age of evil the Lord Jesus is the One who hears the prayer of faith and gives deliverance to those who put their trust in His Word. No case is too difficult for Him to deal with. His disciples often fail because of unbelief and failure to recognize their own inability to work apart from Him, who commissions them to represent Him in this scene.

—Linden J. Carter.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 2

“And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples also, He said unto them, Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it”— Mark 8:34, 35.

SELF-ABNEGATION is the law of the kingdom of God. It is the meek who inherit the earth, the poor in spirit who are infinitely wealthy. In the service of Christ we gain by losing, live by dying, and receive by giving. Does this seem utterly opposed to what the world regards as sound wisdom? It is because the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1:20), and the principles of action which natural men approve are absolutely opposed to those of Heaven.

The Bible abounds with instances of men who triumphed by seeming defeat. Consider Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Paul, and pre-eminently our blessed Lord Himself.

On the other hand, how many there are whose sad failures illustrate the truth that “those that walk in pride He is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37). The names of Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, and Pilate are only a few that might be cited.

It is the part of those who profess to be followers of Christ to share His rejection. Why should they expect recognition from a world that gave their Saviour a cross of shame? To faith there is no greater luxury than identification with Him in suffering and sorrow, that the life given up may prove to be a life preserved unto eternal glory.

—W. Trotter.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 1

“Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be fed, for it is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs” — Mark 7:27.

SHALLOW critics have dared to charge Jesus Christ with harshness in dealing as He did with the Syrophenician woman. It only shows how little they understand His mission and the need of probing human souls in order to produce repentance and faith. The woman was not of the chosen people. She was not in covenant relationship with God. She had no claim on the Son of David as such (Matt. 15:22). The searching words of the Lord Jesus as to the impropriety of casting the children’s bread to the dogs gave her to see her true condition. She exclaimed, “Yes, Lord,” thus owning Him as Master of Jew and Gentile alike, and so humbly pleaded for some crumbs of blessing, which He gladly gave. It was all dispensationally perfect. Now the middle wall of partition has been broken down and “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him” (Rom. 10:12).

Jane Deck Walker.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 30

“In vain do they worship Me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men... making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition” —Mark 7:7, 13.

MAN is ever prone to suppose that formal religious observances will be acceptable to God as a means of procuring the divine favor. But religion as such has no saving value. If fonts and ceremonies could purchase a place in Heaven, there would have been no need for Christ's redemptive work. And even on the part of those already regenerated, the only thing that gives value to outward observances is a right state of heart before God, who desires truth in the inward parts (Psa. 51:6). He has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word" (Isa. 66:2). Again and again He sought to impress upon Israel the importance of reality in their approach to Him (Deut. 10:12; Isa. 57:15; Micah 6:28) Yet they were persistently substituting the outward for the inward, supposing that God would be propitiated by sacramental observances, when all the time He was calling for repentance from dead works and a living faith in His promises.

Many today make the same mistake, a mistake fraught with sad and fearful consequences, for it involves the rejection of the only way of life and salvation and the substitution of a "way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pray. 14:12).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 29

"When He had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided He among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled" — Mark 6:41, 42.

WHEN God brought His people of old out of Egypt, He sustained them in the wilderness during their forty years' sojourn, providing bread from Heaven. It was therefore quite in keeping with His character as Jehovah's Servant that our Lord should minister to the physical needs of men while here on earth. To question the reality of the miracle and to seek to account for it on merely natural grounds is to discount or even deny His divine power and authority. If we accept the truth of the divinity of Christ and acknowledge His true Deity, we need not be concerned about explaining the super naturalness of His works. In multiplying the loaves and fishes He was but doing in a few moments of time what He is constantly doing in the seas and the grain-fields of the world. This miracle was no more difficult for Him than the daily wonder of propagation of vegetable and animal life from infinitesimal seed. When the Creator and Sustainer of this diversified universe walked among men, it was to be expected that mighty works would be manifested in Him (see Matt. 14:2). It was in keeping, too, with His Messiahship that He should satisfy the poor with bread (Psa. 132:15).

—Samuel Longfellow.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 28

"Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them" — Mark 6:4, 5.

HOW strange, it seems, at first, to read that "He could there do no mighty work," and that because of their unbelief. There is a sense in which man's lack of faith shackles divine omnipotence. God has chosen to do for those who believe what, in the very nature of things, He cannot do consistently for those who spurn His Word. The people of Nazareth shut the door of blessing in their own faces by refusing to trust the Carpenter as the Anointed of Jehovah. His very lowliness proved a stumbling-block to their pride. His holiness was a rebuke to their carnality, and by rejecting His testimony they put up a barrier between Paradise and themselves.

"With the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. 11:2). Had they been humble enough to sit at His feet as learners, what lessons of grace and power would have been unfolded to them, and what mighty works would have been wrought in their midst! But they were so self-contented and self-satisfied that His message found no response in their unbelieving hearts, and so they lost the greatest opportunity that they would ever know.

—Grace E. Troy.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 27

"There met Him a man... with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains" — Mark 5:2, 3.

HOW often we have heard some poor derelict of a man, overcome by sin and lost to all sense of decency, described as a "good-for-nothing," But it is for such as him, as for all others, that Christ Jesus came into the world. To Him all men, while lost and ruined in themselves, are good for something, because of what His grace can do for them. George Whitefield used to say that "Jesus will take in the Devil's castaways." Lady Huntingdon objected to this expression until one of Whitefield's converts told her of his own redemption from the lowest strata of degraded society. Then she realized the glorious truth embodied in the homely language of the great field-preacher.

Surely, if any man were utterly good for nothing, it was the poor, demon-possessed wretch who had his dwelling among the foul caves of the dead! But he is only a picture of many men as God sees them under Satan's power— "hateful and hating one another." Christ put a new value on men. No matter how wicked and godless, nor how perverted their instincts, they were potential saints for whom He gave Himself. He was able then, as He is able now, to give complete deliverance and to change them by His grace.

Daily Sacrifice, June 24

“The same day, when the even was come, He cads unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side” —Mark 4:35.

ALL was settled in His mind. He did not suggest that they attempt to reach the other side of the lake, which was the country of the Gadarenes (5:1), but He spoke definitely of actually crossing over. If they had remembered these words later they would have known that no storm could alter His plans for them and for Himself.

Jesus Christ our Lord is Master of all circumstances and sufficient for every emergency—winds and waves obey Him, demons flee before Him, disease and death are destroyed when He appears. Nothing can withstand His power. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. And the wonderful thing for us to know is that He is our Saviour and Redeemer. We who have trusted Him are bidden now to cast every care upon Him because He careth for us. Difficulties are but opportunities for Him to display His power. Emergencies give us the privilege of proving His loving interest in us as we confide in His grace and count on His might.

—J. Denson Smith.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 26

“And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath” — Mark 2:27, 28.

IT was God who, in the goodness of His heart, designated one day in seven as a season of rest for His people. But the advocates of both license and legality perverted this expression of His loving-kindness to their own spiritual undoing. In the name of liberty the Sabbath was used by the openly ungodly as a day of careless pleasure-seeking or of personal gain (Neh. 13:15). On the other hand, the self-righteous hedged the holy day about with numberless regulations of their own devising that made the observance of it far more of a burden than a rest. These traditions of the elders, which were fiercely contended for and which made the Word of God of none effect, were looked upon as the very quintessence of orthodoxy. He who dared to set them to one side was branded as a dangerous heretic.

It was inevitable that Jesus must come into conflict with the religious leaders on this question, and in the portion now before us we have two such instances. In each case it was grace clashing with legality. Grace is warm, compassionate, interested more in men than in ordinances, however good and precious in themselves. Legality is cold, exacting, and far more concerned about punctilious obedience to its demands than about the needs of men and their deliverance from bondage and sin.

The same two principles are in active opposition still, and will ever be until we come to the unity of the faith when our Lord returns and gathers all His own around Himself, to enter into that eternal Sabbath-keeping which remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9; see marg. reading).

— G. W. Frazer.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 25

“Jesus... saith unto them, They that are whole need not a physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” —Mark 2:17.

MEN are not sinners because they sin. They sin because they are sinners. Therefore the sin-question must be settled first of all ere there can be a new order of society which will answer to the mind of God. Nor are men divided by the Lord into classes of little sinners and great sinners, but, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23); therefore all need the same salvation.

Religious forms and ceremonies are powerless to effect the salvation of the soul. The new robe of righteousness is offered in place of the filthy rags of self-righteousness (Isa. 64:6; 61:10). No patching-up process will do. The new wine of the gospel received into the believing heart will give new power in the life. Between salvation by grace and attempted salvation by human effort there can be no compromise.

— Frederick Whitfield.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 24

“Who can forgive sins but God only?... The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins” — Mark 2:7, 10.

NO clearer proof could be given of the deity of our Lord than we find here in His attitude toward this palsied man. His critics were right when they exclaimed, “Who can forgive sins but God only!” What they did not realize was that God incarnate was in their midst. He who had become in grace the Son of Man had all the divine prerogatives still. He had authority, even while sojourning on earth, to forgive sins.

Some time ago a well-known liberal preacher, who denies the Godhead of the Son, said to me, “I am not afraid of Jesus Christ. I can trust Him to deal faithfully with my case.” I replied, “Why should you fear Him? Why do you not say, ‘I am not afraid of Buddha, or of Mohammed?’ If Jesus is only a man, even though the best of men, you do not have to stand before Him for judgment. It is to God all men must give account.”

J. C. Whittier.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 23

“They came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy which was borne of four... when Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee” — Mark 2:3, 5.

THE great outstanding purpose of our Lord’s ministry as the Servant of Jehovah was to bring people into right relationship with God. What availed it if the sick were healed of physical ailments but continued on in their sins, unrepentant and unbelieving? The palsied physical condition of the man who was saved and healed pictures the real state of men generally— “without strength” (Rom. 5:6), and therefore unable to deliver themselves from the dire results of their sins. But Jesus came not to help men save themselves, but to deliver them Himself from their lost estate. It is not when we have done our best that His grace comes in to make up full weight, as it were. But when we realize that we are utterly helpless and look to Him alone for salvation, He does for us what no one else could do.

It is all of grace through faith, that the glory might be His alone. The faith of the four men who brought their palsied friend to Jesus is a beautiful example of fellowship in the glad service of bringing others to Christ. But he, too, believed, and so the faith of all five was rewarded.

—Gibbons.

Daily Sacrifice, June 23

“And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?”— Mark 2:23, 24.

IT is a sad and yet illuminating commentary on the evil of men’s hearts and the perversion of their minds because of sin, that our blessed Lord was so often found in controversy with the leaders of the Jewish people over questions of minor importance, but which unspiritual and legalistic men magnified in their thinking so as to make them of supreme and momentous value. So hedged about were they with human traditions and unauthorized religious observances, that it was next to impossible for the Lord Jesus Christ to exercise His gracious ministry for the glory of His Father and the alleviation of human misery without contravening some of these man-made rules and regulations, which the priesthood in Israel had exalted to the place of sacramental observances. To them it meant far more to attend punctiliously to these traditional commands than to manifest the love of God toward those in physical or even spiritual need and distress. They had never learned the value of a man, in God’s sight, nor how displeasing it is to Him when those who profess to honor His name are indifferent to the sins and sorrows of their fellows.

—Herbert G. Tovey.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, June 22

“John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.... Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan” — Mark 1:4, 9.

JOHN’S baptism was unto repentance. He announced the near approach of the kingdom of God and called upon the people of Israel to get right with God that they might be ready to receive and enter into it. Those who justified God confessed their sins and were baptized (Luke 7:29). Jesus had no sins to confess; He had nothing of which to repent, yet He came to John for baptism, much to the desert preacher’s surprise (Matt. 3:13, 14). But Jesus reassured him. He submitted to baptism as the divinely appointed way of declaring His interest in and identification with the godly remnant in Israel, who were waiting for His coming. His baptism was a pledge to fulfill every righteous demand of the throne of God on behalf of those who owned their guilt and took the place of repentance before Him. They were like debtors giving their notes to a creditor—acknowledging a debt they could not pay. He, by His baptism, endorsed all their notes and made Himself responsible to pay all they owed. On the cross He settled for all when He endured the baptism of judgment in our place.

—J. G. Deck.

Daily Sacrifice, June 22

“He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him”— Mark 1:34.

THESE unclean spirits recognized in Him the One who was to pronounce sentence of judgment upon them. In the unseen world no one doubts the Deity of Christ, Angels gladly confess it. Demons acknowledge it, and men and women who have gone into the other world know His power and authority. It is only on earth that any dare dispute it. He silenced the demons, as He did not desire testimony from them. But He delights in the recognition by men of His true nature and being (Matt. 16:16, 17; John 20:28, 29).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 12

THE Risen Christ is serving still. Though ascended and glorified, the Saviour will never give up the servant character which He assumed in grace when He came from the glory that He had with the Father to this poor world of woe. Throughout all the present age He is “working with” His own as they go forth in His name, and when He brings us into the Father’s house He will gird Himself and serve us. He delights to minister with, in, and to those He loves.

He is the servant still! In obedience to His word, His representatives went forth unto all the world, and everywhere He wrought in and through them, confirming the Word with the promised signs, as we read in the Book of Acts.

—Tregelles.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 11

“Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him” —Mark 16:6.

A PART from the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus we could have no proof that God had accepted the sacrifice He offered as a propitiation for our sins. He “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for out justification” (Rom. 4:25).

By “many infallible proofs” witness has been borne to this great event. Think of any other outstanding incident which occurred any time within some centuries before or after the days of our Lord and ask yourself, “How many witnesses can be cited to prove that this really took place?” You will be astonished as you realize how slender is the evidence that can be adduced. But we have the sober records of the four Evangelists, the added testimony of St. Paul, who saw Christ in the glory, the definite words of James and Jude, the Lord’s brothers, who did not believe during the Lord’s lifetime but were converted when they saw and conversed with Him in resurrection, and the witness of Peter—all of these giving their independent accounts, in which they positively declared that they knew Him as the Risen One. And these are not fanatical emotionalists, but serious-minded men who did not expect Him to rise, and at first could not believe He had done so. Then we have the many eyewitnesses cited by the four Evangelists and by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15:5-8). Added to all these, we have the proof that He is the living Christ in the mighty works of the early Church, and His continued manifestations of saving power throughout the centuries since.

—Anon.

Daily Sacrifice, July 4

“And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”—Mark 15:33, 34.

IN considering the sufferings of our Lord on the cross, it is important to remember that the six hours during which He hung upon the cross were divided into two parts. From the third hour (9 a.m.) to the sixth hour (noon) the sun was shining down upon the scene. During these hours the emphasis is put upon His sufferings at the hands of sinful men. Nothing that man could do to or against Him had anything to do with making atonement for sin. But from the sixth to the ninth hour (3 p.m.) darkness enshrouded the scene, and the Son of Man was hidden from the eyes of the throngs gathered about the cross, while God was dealing with Him about our sins. Then He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Then the bitter cup was pressed to His lips, and He drained it to the dregs. His awful cry of agony and abandonment, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” tells us as nothing else could something of what it meant for Him, the Holy One, to stand before God as our Surety and to bear the judgment which our sins deserved.

—T. J. Bach.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 10

“My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death” —Mark 14:34.

THE Gethsemane experience of our adorable Lord, incomprehensible as it is to our finite minds, emphasizes, as perhaps nothing else could, the reality of His humanity and His utter abhorrence of sin. Although He had become incarnate for the very purpose of becoming the propitiation for our sins, yet as the solemn hour drew nigh when the weight of a world’s iniquity must be heaped upon Him, His holy soul shrank from the fearful ordeal. Hence the impassioned prayer, “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But His human will was absolutely subordinated to the divine will, as evidenced by the further words, “If this cup may not pass... except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

In that garden was settled forever the question as to whether there was any other possible way of salvation for lost men, except through the pouring out of His soul unto death and the draining of the bitter cup of divine wrath against sin.

The hour and the cup are synonymous. That hour had been before Him ever since He came into the world. It was the hour when He should give Himself a ransom for many. We need to realize that it was not easy for the humanity of Jesus to make this supreme sacrifice. It involved circumstances and conditions that the Holy One could only contemplate with horror. Let us learn from His agony in the garden something at least of what it will mean for impenitent sinners to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31).

—Mrs. Cousins.

Daily Sacrifice, July 3

“And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept”— Mark 14:72.

THERE is a difference between Apostasy and Backsliding. This difference is illustrated clearly in the records concerning Judas and Simon Peter. Apostasy is a complete rejection of the truth, and hence of Him who came to proclaim it and who is Himself the way, the truth, and the life. One may profess faith in Christ and give outward adherence to His teaching without ever being born again. In the hour of severe temptation, such an one may apostatize, completely repudiating all he once professed to believe. This is to become apostate, and for such an one there is no promise of restoration. Backsliding, on the other hand, is a lowering of one’s spiritual experience until in the hour of testing there is no strength to stand, and so sad failure may come in to mar one’s testimony. But the Lord says, He is married to the backsliding one, and He will bring about restoration eventually (Jer. 3:14). Peter was a backslider. Though he fell into grievous sin, he soon realized his wretched plight and returned in deep penitence to the Lord he had denied.

—Wm. Blanc.

Daily Sacrifice, July 2

“They came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And He taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy”— Mark 14:32, 33.

IN order to understand the true character of the work of Christ it is all-important that we distinguish carefully between the agony of anticipation in Gethsemane and the agony of abandonment upon the cross. In the Garden the Lord Jesus was not bearing our sins or making atonement for them. The suffering He there endured was in view of the drinking of the cup of wrath, which was the just portion of the wicked (Psa. 75:8), and which was not pressed to His lips until He hung upon the cross. This involved His being made sin for us; He, the sinless One, bearing the judgment that our iniquities deserved. As the holy and righteous One, His spotless soul shrank from the awful ordeal of being numbered with transgressors and accounted as though He were guilty of all the evils that the race had ever known or should ever be guilty of. It was the very perfection of His humanity that caused the Man Christ Jesus the agony depicted in the Synoptic Gospels in view of this fearful ordeal.

Daily Sacrifice, July 1

“Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him”— Mark 14:10, 11.

JUDAS was the treasurer of the apostolic company (John 12:6), trusted by the rest, but all the time unrenewed in heart and life (John 6:70). Professing to be a son of God (Acts 1:17) he was really the son of perdition (John 17:12), destined, because of his own sins, to a lost eternity in endless woe. This was “his own place”. (Acts 1:25). Though so highly privileged, it would have been better for him had he never been born (Matt. 26:24). He was, apparently, the only one of the Twelve not a Galilean. Iscariot (Ish-Kerioth) means “man of Kerioth,” a city of Judah.

It was covetousness, the love of money, a root from which every form of evil may spring (1 Tim. 6:10), that led Judas to betray his Master to those who sought His death. What a solemn warning to all who profess to be Christ’s disciples!

—W. Blane.

Daily Sacrifice, June 30

“And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows” —Mark 13:7, 8.

IT is always a mistake to base the expectation of the Second Advent upon troubled conditions among the nations. God has said, “I will overturn, overturn it... until He come whose right it is” (Ezek. 21:27). This refers to the overturning of governmental authority. Wars will continue in this sin-maddened world until Christ returns as Prince of Peace.

Throughout all the waiting period, before the final hour of tribulation comes, there will be upheavals among the nations and great calamities in the earth. But these do not in themselves declare the end is upon us. They are but the precursors of the day of the wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:12-17) which ushers in the Great Tribulation in all its intensity. They are the inevitable results of sinful man’s rejection of earth’s rightful Ruler.

—H. Bunn.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 8

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” — Mark 12:17.

THERE is no conflict of duties as between the spiritual life and one’s temporal responsibilities. The more truly we love God, the more sincerely will we seek the good of mankind. We express our faith in God by our love for our fellow-men (1 John 3:23). The Christian should be an example in his community of devotion to everything that is good and for the well-being of his neighbors. But this does not involve a recognition of the present world order as the fulfillment of the divine ideal. So long as earth’s rightful Ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ, is rejected, there will never be perfect government in this scene. Nevertheless, “the powers that be are ordained of God,” in the sense that they exist only by His permissive will, hence the importance of subjection to the existing authority in any given country.

If human edicts be positively opposed to the expressed will of God, the Christian is to obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19). Where conditions are such that he can with good conscience cooperate with the government, he is to do so. Any other course would be contrary to the spirit of Him who said, “Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 9

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” — Mark 11:25, 26.

THOSE who have entered into the kingdom by new birth (John 3:5) are all forgiven sinners who stand before God on the ground of pure grace. Nevertheless, as children in the family of God, they are subject to the Father’s discipline and are under His government. The moment our responsibility as sinners, having to do with the God of judgment, ended, our responsibility as children, having to do with our Father, began. In this new relationship we are to display the activities of the divine nature and therefore are called upon to act in grace toward any who may offend us. If we fail to do this, we will be sternly disciplined in order that the government of God may be maintained.

It is the Father who deals with the members of His own family, and who will not overlook harshness or lack of compassion on the part of His children toward their erring brethren.

Daily Sacrifice, June 29

“Seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet”— Mark 11:13.

FIGS begin to form on the Palestina wild fig-tree as on some other varieties, before the leaves appear; so from its outward appearance this tree should have been in fruit. But it was like men who make a fair profession of piety, but in whose lives none of its fruits are to be found. Such was the nation of Israel at this time. They prided themselves on being the chosen people of the Lord and were very punctilious about religious rites and ceremonies, but their hearts were far from God, and the fruits of a living faith were lacking. Jesus said to the barren fig tree, “Let no fruit grow on thee forever.” This was the “curse” He pronounced against it, And before the day had gone, the “fig tree withered away.” In this it became a symbol of what Israel was to become because they knew not the time of their visitation. From the Jewish nation after the flesh God will never look for fruit again. When they turn to Him they will become a regenerated people, and in that day will bear fruit to His glory.

—L. E. Akerman.

Daily Sacrifice, June 28

“They brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and He sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest”— Mark 11:7-10.

IT is interesting and profitable to observe how exactly the various outstanding events in our Lord’s life were predicted by prophets, divinely-inspired men of God (2 Pet. 1:21) who lived hundreds of years before their words began to be fulfilled. Zechariah was one of the post-exilic prophets who spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow (1 Peter 5:1). Graphically he portrayed Israel’s rightful King entering His earthly capital in lowly state, riding upon an ass (Zech. 9:9). But between this verse and that which immediately follows, there was to ensue a long period of rejection by His chosen people. Centuries were to roll by before the words were to be fulfilled which declare, He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” Yet all will come to fruition in God’s appointed time.

— George C. Stebbins.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 7

“Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them... but so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister” — Mark 10:42, 43.

IN WORDLY politics we are accustomed to the selfish saying, “To the victors belong the spoils,” Even in a democratic country like our own we have become inured to the idea that when a particular party gets into power, its adherents may expect to be rewarded with public offices at the behest of senators and other officials. And while civil service reform was intended to put a stop to such practices, there is very little activity of conscience regarding this method of recognizing faithful party-henchmen.

But it is far otherwise in the kingdom of God. There self-seeking has no place, and he who serves with self-interest in view will lose out at last. When our Lord sits on the judgment seat every man’s work will be manifested “of what sort it is.” Quality will count in that day. The one who will be given the chief place at last is the one who abases himself to serve all.

—J. J. P.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, July 6

“And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions”— Mark 10:22.

NO more searching incident than this is found in the four Gospels, unless it be the Lord’s interview with Nicodemus, as recorded in John 3. Surely, no honest person can contemplate it without facing the question. On what do I base my hope of eternal life? If on self-effort, I build on sinking sand. If on Christ alone, my confidence is founded upon an unshakeable rock.

But I must be sure that my professed faith in Him is not a mere intellectual acceptance of, certain historic facts. To believe in Him is to commit myself to Him. This necessarily involves my recognition of His Lordship. He who died to save me is now to have authority over my life.

Anything short of this is but an empty profession. Let me then face the matter honestly and never be satisfied until I know beyond a doubt that I have yielded to the claims of the Lord Jesus.

The rich young man was of charming disposition and pleasant personality, but he was devoid of divine life, which is the result of new birth (John 3:3). There is a vast difference between the attractiveness of what is merely natural and the beauty of character that is spiritual in its origin. No human effort can ever change flesh into spirit. Therefore the need of the impartation of life from above, which comes through faith in Christ (John 3:6, 7, 14-16).

—F. R. Havergal.

Daily Sacrifice, June 27

“What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder”— Mark 10:9.

IT is not to be expected that ungodly men and women will bow to the authority of Christ as to marriage or any other matter. But those who profess to honor His name should be willing to suffer any inconvenience or discomfort rather than violate His Word. He instituted marriage for the blessing of the race, and especially for the protection of the children. It is this that Malachi stresses (Mal. 2:14, 15). The children suffer most when the home is broken up. Yet the selfishness of those who have brought these little ones into the world will lead unsubject souls to destroy the home they have set up, in order to gratify their unbridled desires.

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