Psalms - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, March 12

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

“When He maketh inquisition for blood, He remembreth them: He forgetteth not the cry of the humble”—Psalms 9:12.

COUNTLESS multitudes of His faithful witnesses have been martyred by the relentless religio-world system which is to be headed up in Babylon the Great. Untold myriads have stained the earth with their blood and have been taken home to be with Christ after having been branded as dangerous heretics by those who arrogated to themselves the title of Christ’s representatives. But not one of these has been forgotten by God. When “that great city Babylon” shall be thrown down to rise no more, in her will be found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all that were slain upon the earth. Divine retribution will be meted out to all who have had any part in the persecution and oppression of God’s children to whom His truth was more precious than life itself. The Greeks used to say that the mills of the gods grind slowly but they grind exceedingly small. Surely in a truer sense may this be said of the government of our God. Nothing can impede the progress of His royal chariot. Blessed are they who do and die for His sake!

—Mrs. A. R. Cousins.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 3

“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people” —Psa. 96:1-3.

THE book of Psalms is composed largely of poetical expressions of worship, but on reading these matchless hymns of praise we need to remember that redemption was not yet actually accomplished. The veil was unrent. God was hidden in the thick darkness (2 Chron. 6:1). His people worshiped in an earthly sanctuary and their understanding of His truth was very limited compared to that full revelation now given in the New Testament, particularly in the Epistles, which open up the truth of Christ’s finished work on the cross, the rent veil permitting God to come out to man and man to go in to God. Our place of worship is the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 10:19), where Christ sits exalted at the Father’s right hand. We are called to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), as those whose citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and who are in the joyful consciousness that we have been accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).

—Mary Howley.

Daily Sacrifice, March 31

“The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God”— Psalms 84:3.

THE sparrow, the most worthless of birds, and the swallow, the most restless, picture us in our natural estate as utterly unprofitable in ourselves and unable to find rest in anything that earth can offer. Yet we may go to the altars of the Lord and there find all our hearts crave. Notice there are two altars—that of sacrifice in the court of the sanctuary, where the Victim was slain and offered up on the sinner’s behalf, and the golden incense-altar in the holy place, which speaks of Christ’s intercession in heaven. We find rest for the conscience in the work of the cross and rest for our hearts in our Lord’s gracious ministry in heaven and on our behalf.

—Mary Helen Anderson.

Daily Sacrifice, March 11

THIS psalm celebrates the omnipotence of God as manifested in creation (1-3), and then looks at man in his littleness and helplessness, standing in vivid contrast to the almighty power of Jehovah, and yet the object of His special favor. It is not of man as originally created that the question “What is man?” is asked. But of man, fallen, for it is “the son of man” that is in view, Adam was the son of God (Luke 3;38) by direct creation. The son of man takes in the entire fallen race. But what was lost by Adam’s sin is retrieved in Christ; therefore He is emphatically the Son of Man who will be set over all creation in God’s due time (Heb. 2:6-9). What the first man lost by sin the Son of Man has regained by redemption.

—Miss H. K. Burlingham.

Daily Sacrifice, March 30

“Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?”— Psalm 77:9.

WHY does God delay? How often have troubled hearts asked this question! Afflictions abound, sorrows increase, difficulties surround on every hand. In earnest prayer all these things are brought before the Lord. Yet there is no apparent response. Does He not care that His people are in such suffering and distress? Far be the thought! He not only cares, but He is ready to supply all needed grace for the trial, and when the hour has struck He can be depended upon to act in power, according to the need. God’s delays are not to be interpreted as denials. When we get Home, we shall understand why He seemed to tarry when we felt the need was so urgent.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 2

“Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain” — Psalms 76:8, 10.

NOTHING perplexes the average believer in the justice of God more than the mystery of His long toleration of evil. But the man of faith can afford to wait in quietness and confidence (Isa. 30:15), assured that He who is the righteous Judge of all men will never permit anything in this universe which will not prove at last to have been under His overruling hand and allowed for some good purpose. He will never have to apologize to any of His creatures for anything He ever does or which He permits to be done by Satan and those who are subject to the great Adversary. All things are so ordered or overruled that He will be glorified and man will be blessed when the mystery of God is finished (Rev. 10:7) and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, (Rev. 11:15).

—Samuel Longfellow.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 1

“Give the King Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the King’s son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness... In His days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” —Psalms 72:1-3, 7, 8.

WAR is the result of the distrust and jealousies that prevail among the nations, and all of these are but expressions of the sinfulness of men’s hearts. Until all this is curbed there can be no lasting peace for mankind. Men may try to bring about universal peace by treaties and covenants, but as long as sin rules in their hearts their efforts will only end in disappointment and heart-rending strife. Only when the Lord Jesus Christ asserts His power, at His second coming, will the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (Rev. 11:15). Then all the glorious predictions of the prophets will be literally fulfilled and wars will cease out of the earth, for everywhere men will own the authority of Him who alone can carry out the divine program. So long as He is rejected, there must be conflicts and misunderstandings among the nations, but when He comes to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16), God’s will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven (Matt. 6:10).

—C. C. Crowston.

Daily Sacrifice, March 29

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me—Psalms 66:18.

HERE we have the reason why many of our prayers are not answered. So long as we are not honest before God, so long as we are endeavoring to hide or gloss over unconfessed sin, we have no right to expect anything from God. He has never promised to answer the prayer that comes from one who is going on in that which he knows to be wrong. It is as we come before Him in a self-judged spirit, seeking to know and to do His will, that He delights to hear and undertake for us. If we ask anything according to His will we know that He hears us, and will answer in a way that will fill our hearts with praise and bring glory to His own holy name.

—James Montgomery.

Daily Sacrifice, March 28

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him”— Psalms 62:5.

THE man of faith recognizes no second causes. He takes everything as from the Lord, either directly or by His permissive will. Therefore, he can look up to Him in every circumstance and count on God’s sustaining grace in every hour of trial and testing. They who wait upon Him, we are told, shall never be ashamed. They are enabled to mount up as with eagles’ wings above the mists of earth into the clear sunlight of divine love. They run the race without weariness; they walk the rugged path without fainting. For God has promised that they shall not want any good thing. Therefore, the trusting soul goes on his way with gladness, looking to Him alone to meet every need.

—Samuel Longfellow.

Daily Sacrifice, March 27

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee—Psalms 55:22.

WE wrong our own souls and grieve the heart of our loving Lord if we fail to heed His gracious Word, bidding us cast our burdens on Him, counting on His sustaining grace. Yet how slowly we learn the folly of endeavoring to struggle along under the load of care from which He would gladly relieve us! Our very trials and testing’s are permitted in order that we may learn in full measure how wonderfully God can undertake for us.

—Anon.

Daily Sacrifice, March 26

“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me”— Psalms 51:11.

WE are not to understand the various expressions rating to the activities or operations of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times, in the same sense as we do since Pentecost. Prior to that great day, the Holy Spirit fell upon men, empowering or enlightening them for certain lines of service, but that did not necessarily mean that new birth had taken place. Now He indwells all real believers (Rom. 8:9, 15) and He imparts various gifts for service according to His will (1 Cor. 12:4, 7). He never leaves one whom He seals (Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30). Of old, He came upon Saul—an outward thing—and left him when he proved rebellious. Now, lie abides forever in the hearts of those who trust in Christ (John 14:16).

—G. Ter Steegen.

Daily Sacrifice, March 25

“Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice”— Psalms 50:5.

GOD would ever have His people gathered to and about Himself. In Genesis 49:10, where Christ is seen prophetically as Shiloh in whom is peace, we read, “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” When Israel thirsted in the wilderness God commanded, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water” (Num. 21:16). In the new age just dawning, the Lord Jesus declared, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). In view of His glorious return Paul writes of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and “our gathering together unto Him” (2 Thess. 2:1).

As His people give Him His rightful place in the midst, their hearts are drawn out in worship and praise, while they contemplate the sacrifice of the cross.

Daily Sacrifice, March 10

“Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself”— Psalms 4:3.

THIS is true sanctification: to be set apart from the world and all its allurements for Himself, that we may be to the praise of His glory. It is when He is known, first as our Saviour and then as our Lord, that our hearts instinctively turn from all else to Him, and that we find in Him full satisfaction as we dwell in His presence, securely sheltered beneath His wings, enjoying the wealth of love that He delights to lavish upon His chosen ones.

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, March 31

“The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” —Psalms 41:3.

SICKNESS is one of the many consequences of sin. Believers’ bodies are as subject to illnesses as those of the unsaved, because we are still waiting for the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23), which we shall receive at our Lord’s return (Phil. 3:20, 21). But we are encouraged to pray for physical health (James 5:16), and when granted, whether with or without means such as medicines, and so forth, we should recognize all as coming from God Himself.

When tempted to think that God has forgotten and that we have very little to praise Him for, let us consider how sinful and disobedient we have often been and how patiently He has borne with us. As we reflect on these things, we will have a new conception of His love and grace.

—Isaac Watts.

Praying in the Holy Spirit, Prayer and Communion

“If ye abide in Me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

“Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa. 37:4).

WE are now to consider prayer as the expression of the soul’s communion with God. It is as the heart is finding its perfect satisfaction in the Lord Himself and delighting in His Word, that the Holy Spirit dwelling within the believer indites those petitions which, because they are in accordance with the mind of God, cannot fail of an answer. And if we stop to consider what is involved in this statement, it will perhaps begin to dawn upon us that true prayer is a great deal more than some of us have thought. It is certainly far more than going lightly into the presence of God with some request upon the lips that is possibly dictated by the selfishness of one’s own heart rather than for the desire of the glory of God Himself. It is to those who consciously abide in Him that He promises to grant their every request. If, therefore, I pray and there seems to be no answer, it would be well for me to remember the Word of the Lord, “When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou past shut the door pray to thy Father in secret.” Thus removed from all human interruption or worldly distraction, let there be a period of honest self-examination in the quiet presence of God. Ask yourself, for instance, such questions as the following, and do not fear to answer each one faithfully and honestly:

1. Am I truly desirous that God’s will should be done in me at whatever cost?

2. In presenting this particular request which I have been bringing to God, am I seeking His glory or my own pleasure?

3. Is there anything in my life with which God has a controversy?

4. Have I been guilty of any known sin which lies unconfessed and unjudged upon my conscience?

5. Am I consciously yielded to God and endeavoring to walk in obedience to His Word?

6. Have I availed myself of the instruction which I might have had in this Word of God, by meditating upon it carefully day by day that this I may learn His will?

7. If my own heart condemns me along any of these lines, do I now honestly judge in myself everything that He by the Spirit through the Word shows me to be contrary to His mind?

I do not, of course, mean that such an introspective catechism must he gone over question by question literally and in just such an order as I have here indicated. I have rather sought to put before the reader an outline of the method which I myself have employed for many years, though not always using the same terms, but what I do earnestly desire to press is the importance of some such definite facing of conditions in order that one may take stock, so to speak, of his own actual state of soul. It may be that conscience does not condemn on any point, but even then it is well to rem-ember that God, who “is greater than our heart and knoweth all things,” may detect something in us which we ourselves fail to recognize. The Apostle Paul said on one occasion, “I know nothing by, or against, myself, but He that judgeth me is the Lord.”

Therefore the importance of a lowly mind even when not conscious of failure.

After such a season of self-examination as I have indicated, weigh carefully the petition which you feel God has not answered. Look at it squarely, and see if you can honestly present it again in the light of all that has transpired between your soul and God. Perhaps you will realize that you cannot consistently press your claim lest, in doing so, you try to take yourself out of the hand of God. Perhaps it may he the very opposite. You will have your faith strengthened, and you will realize more clearly than before that your request was such an one as you were entitled to present with confidence, and you will see that the temporary delay in answering was not a denial, but rather a test of faith. You will then spread the matter before the Lord, but leave it to Him as to the time and the manner in which He is to answer your cry and give you your heart’s desire.

Undoubtedly, many times the Lord purposely waits, when Ills loving heart would gladly give us at once that for which we yearn, but He would make us more dependent upon Himself, and more appreciative of His mercies when we receive them. The waiting season may become to our souls a time of rich spiritual blessing and of real growth in grace, as we learn to say, “My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” Others have pointed out that the Hebrew word here translated “expectation” is exactly the same as the word translated “cord” in Joshua 2:15. Think of the spies suspended by a cord from the window of the house of Rahab, and think of your own soul linked by expectation with the very throne of God! What a cord is this to draw your heart out to Himself as you wait upon Him to fulfill His Word in His own way and time!

As the soul enters more deeply into communion, the form of the petition may itself become changed, and that almost unconsciously, so that instead of definiteness there may be seeming indefiniteness, but this does not necessarily indicate lack of faith, but rather fuller confidence in the unchanging love and wisdom of Him who delights to have us address Him as “Our Father.” We read in Philippians 4:6,7: “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” How blessed is this! The soul in communion with God knows no anxiety, but is enabled to bring everything that might otherwise fret or distress the heart to God Himself by prayer and supplication, not forgetting thanksgivings for past mercies as well as for present blessings; and the heart rests in quietness garrisoned by the very peace of God, a peace which passes understanding, because the human mind knows nothing of it. It is something of a purely spiritual character, not to be in any way confounded with stoical resignation or a mere human determination to make the best of circumstances. It is the very calm that dwells in the heart of the Eternal as He sits in peace upon His throne far above all the storms of earth, keeping the hearts and minds of those who believe in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and commit everything to Him in prayer, at rest amid all earth’s changing scenes.

A few years ago I was a guest in a Christian home in a Western city. I sat one day at my desk with an open window before me. A beautiful child of perhaps eight years old was disporting herself upon the lawn, and made a lovely picture in that garden of roses. Shortly my attention was attracted by the voice of another child who had come up to the gate and called to my little friend in the garden. “Annie,” she said, “we

are going to have a picnic on Saturday, and a lot of us will be there, and we want you to come along. Will you?" "I will ask my mother," replied the other, and immediately ran around the house to make inquiry. In a little while she returned and reported: "Mother says she will think about it." "Oh," exclaimed the other in an annoyed voice; "don't leave it like that. Go and tease her until she says yes." "It isn't necessary to tease my mother," said little Annie; "if she thinks it is best for me I know she will let me go, and if she doesn't let me go, she probably has something nicer in her mind any way." Darling, trustful child, I thought in my heart, what a lesson you may teach to many of your elders in regard to trusting implicitly the loving heart of our Father above!

Prevailing prayer is not to be confounded with the fretful teasing of a restless heart, unhappy and dissatisfied, crying out rebelliously for changed circumstances that its own comfort may be increased. It is rather the trusting petition of a soul at perfect peace, resting in the very center of the will of God, asking in happy confidence for what the blessed Holy Spirit knows will bring added glory to God. It is thus as we learn to delight in the Lord for what He is in Himself, not merely because of what He gives to us, that we have the assurance that when we pray in faith, we shall receive the desires of our heart. That it would, in fact, he positively hurtful to our own souls to give us such desires, if not finding our delight in Christ and not abiding in Him, our next paper will attempt to make clear.

Daily Sacrifice, March 24

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way"— Psalms 37:23.

ELSEWHERE David prayed, "Order my steps in Thy Word." This is the only path of safety through a defiling world. The Word of God is a light on the road, showing up every danger and snare and indicating the right places upon which to place our feet. The words of the Apostle John may well be taken as from the Lord Himself, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Some one noticed that in George Muller's Bible he had written in the margin opposite this verse, and as following after steps, "and the stops." Our steps and our stops are alike ordered of the Lord as we allow Him to guide by His Word.

—J. G. Deck.

Daily Sacrifice, March 23

"They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures"— Psalms 36:8.

THE river of God's pleasure is the Holy Spirit's testimony to the glory of Christ. Like the refreshing stream of Ezekiel's vision, it brings life and gladness everywhere this river goes. We drink of it now and our souls are refreshed. We shall drink it forever, for it is the same river that flows through the street of the heavenly Jerusalem. God delights in Christ and He would have us delight in Him too.

—C. P. C.

Daily Sacrifice, March 22

"They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed"— Psalms 34:5.

IT is not merely that divine light penetrates the soul when we gaze by faith upon the face of the God of all grace as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, but the wonderful thing is that we reflect the glory that shines from His countenance in our own lives. The words rendered "were lightened" might well be translated "became radiant." Just as Moses looked upon the face of God and his own face became radiant, so the believer who is occupied with Christ will show by a radiant life that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. This was true of the disciples of old when people took knowledge of them that they had been in the company of God's blessed Son.

—T. P.

Daily Sacrifice, March 21

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile"— Psalms 32:1, 2.

HERE we have the fourfold blessedness of the sinner who has turned to the Lord and put his trust in Him. First, his transgressions are all forgiven. Second, his sin is atoningly covered by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, God no longer imputes iniquity to him but recognizes him now as His own child, standing in grace before Him. Fourth, he is a man in whose spirit is no guile, for there is nothing more to hide. All has come out in confession before God and has been forever put away, so that God Himself will remember his sins and iniquities no more. This is the portion of all who believe the message of the gospel.

—J. G. Deck.

Daily Sacrifice, March 20

“In Thee O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Thy righteousness” —Psalms 31:1.

THIS was the verse that stirred the soul of Luther. As a monk in the monastery, greatly troubled about his sins, he read in the Latin Psalter, “Deliver (or save) me in Thy righteousness.” “What!” he exclaimed, “I can understand how God could judge me in His righteousness, but surely if He saves me it must be in His mercy.” As he continued to ponder the Word of God, particularly the truth as set forth in the Epistle to the Romans, he learned how God could be just and yet the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus. This is the great truth which when once that Luther grasped it, was used to bring about the Reformation.

Daily Sacrifice, March 9

“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed”— Psalms 2:2.

GOD calls His King His Anointed, that is, His Messiah.

The term was used very loosely at first. King Saul is called “the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam. 24:6; 26:9, 16; 2 Sam. 1:14, 16). David was thus designated (2 Sam. 22:51). But as time went on, there was One personality before the eye of God who was distinctively marked out as His Anointed. This is the rejected One of Psalms 2:2, He is called Anointed in four definite aspects. 1, He was anointed from eternity (Prov. 8:23, “set up” is really “anointed”). 2, As born into this world, He was owned of God as the Anointed (Christ) (Matt. 1:16). 3, After His baptism in the Jordan He was anointed as the Servant of Jehovah, and He was recognized as the Anointed throughout His ministry on earth (Matt. 16:16). 4, In resurrection God has now made Him to be Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

—Richard Holden.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, March 30

“I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living”— Psalms 27:13.

THE first three words are italicized in our English version and do not represent any words in the original text. Actually, the sentence is, in a sense, unfinished. Or it may be considered as an exclamation, “Oh, if I had not believed to behold the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!” Had David been without faith and spiritual insight, he could not, dare not, think what the sad results might have been when his enemies were seeking his destruction and false witnesses were endeavoring to blight his life and ruin his testimony. But believing God, he triumphed over them all. Looking upon the promises of the Lord as certain of fulfillment, he was preserved from moral and spiritual shipwreck.

—T. O. Chisholm.

Daily Sacrifice, March 19

HE who desires divine guidance must humble himself before God and be submissive to His will. We often pray that the Lord will lead us and show us the way we should go when actually what we have in mind is that He should endorse the plans we have already made. This is always wrong. True prayer does not consist in trying to persuade God to do what we want Him to do, or to endorse some plan that we have already made. It rather consists in submission to His will and a sincere desire to learn from Him the path He would have us take. When we come to Him in meekness we can be sure that He will guide us aright.

—G. Ter Steegen.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, March 29

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want” —Ps. 23:1.

SOMEONE has said, “Psalms 23 is the best loved of all the Psalms and it is the one least believed!” Do we really believe it? We all love it; do we not? Its beautiful imagery, its wonderful idyllic poetry, its expressions of confidence in Jehovah, our Great Shepherd, appeal to every discriminating and Spirit-taught mind. But do we know the blessedness of resting upon its implied promises? When out of employment, laid aside by illness, or facing bereavement, are we able to say from the heart, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want?” Not want what? Another psalm answers, “They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing” (Psa. 34:10). And again, “There is no want to them that fear Him” (Psa. 34:9). Why, then, should the child of God ever be troubled and distressed by thoughts of future ill? God is over all and He is undertaking for us.

Since the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want:

Daily Sacrifice, March 18

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake”— Psalms 23: 3.

WHO need fear or falter with such a Guide? He who died for us as the Good Shepherd now leads us on through the wilderness of this world as the Great Shepherd, guarding and protecting us until the glad hour when He will return as the Chief Shepherd to reward all His under-shepherds and to gather His flock about Him in the eternal fold.

Sometimes the road may seem rough, and conditions may be far from such as flesh and blood would choose, but when assured of His leading we can go on in faith and patience, knowing that all must work out for our blessing and for His glory.

—N. L. Zinzendorf.

Daily Sacrifice, March 17

IN this psalm we are permitted to draw near and listen to the breathings of the heart of our blessed Lord as He took the sinner’s place and bore our judgment or the cross. The psalm begins with His cry of agony, “My God, My God, why host Thou forsaken Me?” The Hebrew ending of the last verse might readily be translated, “It is finished.” Made sin for us, our Saviour cries, “I am a worm, and no man.” The word rendered “worm” is tola, minute creatures which were gathered in quantities and crushed in order to produce the scarlet dye, which speaks of worldly glory. On the cross the Lord Jesus was crushed in judgment that we who trust in Him might be robed in garments of glory to His eternal praise.

—G. T. S.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, March 27

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night” — Psalms 1:1, 2.

THIS blessed man is God’s ideal of what man ought to be in this scene. It finds its perfect fulfillment in the holy behavior of our Lord Jesus Christ, whoever did the things that pleased the Father. We, in our measure, are called to walk as He walked (1 John 2:6), according to the example He has left us (1 Peter 2:21). To do this we must be regenerated (Titus 3:5). It is a life of holy separation from all evil that is in view. The blessed man is careful to avoid any participation with the ungodly so far as their attitude toward divine things is concerned. His piety does not consist in a negative attitude toward evil alone, but in the positive enjoyment of what is good. The Word of God is precious to him and is his spiritual food, assimilated by meditation (Jer. 15:16).

Perennially fresh and ever fruitful, the blessed man is likened to a tree whose roots go down to the water streams, ever drawing up that which tends to growth and enrichment, so that he is a witness for God to all who know him, as they see how richly grace is working in his soul.

—G. Deck.

Illustrations Of Bible Truth, God’s Blessed Man

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Psalm 1:1

I was very much impressed, a number of years ago, as I listened to Joseph Flacks tell of his visit to Palestine. When he was in the city of Jerusalem he was given the opportunity of addressing quite a gathering of Jews and Arabs, all of whom were presumably unconverted. For his text, Mr. Flacks took the first Psalm. Of course, he could repeat it to them in the Hebrew. He dwelt upon the tenses, “Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful.”

He said to them, “Now, my brethren, who is this blessed man of whom the psalmist speaks? Notice, this happy man is a man who never walked in the counsel of the ungodly, he never stood in the way of sinners, he never sat in the seat of the scornful. He was an absolutely sinless man. Who is this blessed man?” When no one answered, Joseph Flacks said, “Shall we say he is our great Father Abraham? Is it Father Abraham that the psalmist is speaking of here?”

One old Jew said, “No, no, it cannot be Abraham, for he denied his wife; he told a lie about her.”

“Ah,” said Joseph Flacks, “it does not fit, does it? Abraham, although he was the father of the faithful, yet was a sinner who needed to be justified by faith. But, my brethren, this refers to somebody; who is this man? Could it be our great lawgiver, Moses?”

“No, no,” they said, “it cannot be Moses. He killed a man and hid him in the sand.” Another added, “And he lost his temper by the water of Meribah.”

“Well,” Joseph Flacks said, “my brethren, who is it? There is some man here that the Spirit of God is bringing before us. Could it be our great King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, who perhaps wrote this Psalm?”

“No, no,” they cried, “it cannot be David. He committed adultery and had Uriah slain.”

“Well,” he said, “who is it; to whom do these words refer?”

They were quiet for some little time and then one Jew arose and said, “My brethren, I have a little book here; it is called the New Testament. I have been reading it. If I believed this book, if I could be sure that it is true, I would say that the man of the first Psalm was Jesus of Nazareth.”

An old Jew got right up and said, “My brethren, the man of the first Psalm is Jesus of Nazareth. He is the only one who ever went through this world who never walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners.”

Then the old man told how he had been brought to believe in Christ, and he took that occasion to openly confess his faith. He had been searching for a long time and had found out sometime before that Jesus was the One, but he had not had the courage to tell others.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, March 28

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.... The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” — Psalms 19:1, 7.

IN this nineteenth Psalm we are called to consider the twofold testimony of creation and of the Word, or the Bible, as we call it. God has revealed His eternal power and deity in the wonders of the created universe (Rom. 1:20). This testimony is so full and so wonderful, so compelling, if considered carefully, that men are without excuse if they reject it. In addition, however, He has revealed His love and His righteousness in the Scriptures, where we learn of His marvelous plan of redemption for lost mankind. It is this which, if received in faith, will produce the new birth (1 Peter 1:23-25).

The amazing mechanism of the universe declares there is a Master Mind behind it. It is designed to lead men to recognize the personality and omnipotence of God. Well has Young written, “An undevout astronomer is mad.” The heavens are ever telling of their Creator’s wisdom, and calling men to bow reverently before Him and to seek His face. But it is only in the Scriptures that we have the full revelation of His Fatherhood and His redemptive plan. We should never understand His grace apart from its manifestation in our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the central theme of both Testaments. It is through this unveiling that we are enabled to draw nigh to God, knowing He is full of mercy and compassion, infinitely holy and righteous, yet ready to forgive all who trust His Son, who has made full expiation for all our sins.

— Wade Robinson.

Daily Sacrifice, March 16

“The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower”— Psalms 18:2.

THE Psalmist uses seven different words to describe what the Lord meant to his soul. As we meditate upon them we get some sense of His all-sufficiency, not only to meet every need but also to protect from every danger, to strengthen for every trial and to arm us for every conflict. Why, then, should we ever dread the onslaught of the enemy or become distressed or discouraged when circumstances seem to press hard against us. The God who is the rock of our salvation is also the fortress in which we are safe from every foe, and the deliverer who stands between us and the enemy. He Himself is our strength and shield. In Him we have everything that heart can desire. Our salvation is in His keeping; He is the high tower from which we view the land of promise whither His grace will soon take us to be with Himself.

—William O. Cushing.

Daily Sacrifice, March 15

“As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” —Psalms 17:15.

GOD has so ordained it that nothing in this world will ever satisfy the human heart. What our Lord said of the well of Sychar is true of everything that earth can offer, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” Even in the experience of devoted Christians there is always something lacking, something yet to be desired as long as we are here in our mortal bodies, but when at last we shall enter into the presence of the Lord, when we shall see Him as He is and become fully like Him, then indeed we shall have attained that for which we longed all through the years—perfect satisfaction. There will be no yearning for that which has not yet been attained, because there will be nothing left that our hearts shall long for that we will not have already, in being with Christ and like Christ for eternity.

—Horatius Bonar.

Daily Sacrifice, March 14

“The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot”— Psalms 16:5.

IT is a blessed experience when one has learned to find everything in God. When the sense of His presence and the realization of His loving-kindness fills the soul, and He Himself is the portion of our cup, we can well cry, “My cup runneth over.”

Yet we are often so foolish and imagine that we can find satisfaction elsewhere than in Christ Himself; but when all else fails and we turn to Him, we find that He is all we need to satisfy our hearts and to guide and direct our steps, as we pursue our pilgrim way through this world on to the next that remains for the people of God.

When we find our inheritance in Him we are no longer distressed and troubled because of difficult conditions which we have to meet as we walk in fellowship with Him through this world.

—Mrs. Steele.

Daily Sacrifice, April 6

“All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom”— Psalms 145:10-12.

IT is a wonderful thing to know that God has spoken to men. There is a sense—and a very important one—in which He ever speaks in Nature. This vast and amazing creation bears constant witness to His eternal power and wisdom (Rom. 1:20). It tells of a personal God behind the universe, who sees and hears and is concerned about our comfort and well-being. It is unthinkable that He who created the eye cannot see, or that He who created the ear cannot hear (Psa. 94:9). But He has given a more remarkable testimony than that of His works, great as they are. He has given us His holy Word—an inspired Book consisting of messages given through many different prophets and divinely commissioned representatives, over a period of sixteen centuries. In the Bible we have a clear revelation of Him and His holy will. And there we read how He has spoken in His Son (Heb. 1:2). In Christ we see God fully told out (John 1:18).

—Helen Howarth Lemmel.

Daily Sacrifice, March 13

“How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?”— Psalm 13:1, 2.

FOUR times the Psalmist asks the question, “How long?” He was suffering keenly; his soul was in deep distress, and it seemed that there was no end to his sorrow and perplexity.

Many other children of God have been in the same condition, and have felt as though the Lord had forgotten and was indifferent to their needs and their prayers, but we may be sure that He never forgets, and even though He may permit the trial to continue for what seems to us an exceedingly long time, relief will come at last, and we shall know as we look back that all His dealings with us were in love and grace.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 5

“If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me” —Psalms 139:9,10.

A REALIZATION of the omnipresence of God must be a source of wretchedness to the wicked, who would fain find a hiding-place where His holy eye cannot see them, but it occasions great joy and comfort to the tried believer, who knows that, through grace, God is his own loving Father and that His holy eye ever looks down in compassion upon His people as they face the trials and testing’s of this life. The personality of God means so much to the soul who trusts Him. No mere impersonal force or unsympathetic principle of nature can comfort the heart and meet the need of the one who yearns for fellowship with the living God (Psa. 42:1, 2). He is the God of the spirits of all flesh (Num. 16:22), the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9), who is the Creator of the ends of the earth (Isa. 40:28), and the Sustainer of all who turn to Him I Psalms 55:22). He is above all and through all and in us all (Eph. 4:6), and nothing is hidden from His eyes (Psa. 11:4), those eyes which run to and fro through the whole earth to take note of all who confide in Him and seek to do His will, that He may show Himself strong in their behalf (2 Chron. 16:9).

—C. H. I.

The Unchanging Christ and Other Sermons, 4. The Sacrifice Bound to the Altar

A Communion Meditation

Text: “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” (Psa. 118:27).

You will readily recognize the reference to the altar of burnt offering which of old stood just inside the gate of the tabernacle. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with brass or copper, and had a grate in the center of it where the victim was burned typifying the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. As these various sacrificial beasts were brought to be offered to Jehovah, they were bound to the horns of the altar, which

were upon its four corners.

In this Scripture, which is a Messianic Psalm, picturing our Lord Jesus Christ as the rejected One giving Himself for us, we see the meaning of the horns. He was bound to them. It is in this same Psalm that we read, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” It speaks of our Lord Jesus, the One who “came to His own but His own received Him not.” He was rejected by those He loved so tenderly and was taken out to die. He was the victim bound as it were to the horns of the altar. That altar for Him was the cross on which He yielded up His life for our redemption. The horn signifies power —the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. Four speaks of universality—He gave Himself a ransom for all.

What were the cords that bound Him there? It is a rather significant thing that the only other instance in all the Bible, as far as I can recall, where we actually read of a sacrifice being bound to the altar is in the case of Isaac. God said to Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” And we are told how the father and son went together to Mt. Moriah and how Isaac looked up to his father and said, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?” Abraham replied, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.” What prophetic words were those! Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day.” He looked on in faith to the coming into this scene of “the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” But again typically, we read, “Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” Then God intervened. Someone has well said, “He spared that father’s heart the pang which He would not spare His own.” This is the fullest picture of the sacrifice of Christ which we have in the Old Testament. Elsewhere we read of bulls and goats and rams offered to God, but here we have a man; here we have a beloved son bound with cords to the altar.

What were the cords? It seems to me we might think of one of them as “The Golden Cord of Love to God the Father.” You remember how our Lord Jesus Christ declared in John’s Gospel, “No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:18). And again you recall His words, as He left the upper room to go out to the Garden, “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). He was not a helpless victim in the hands of wicked men. He had demonstrated over and over again that they had no real power over Him. Three years before when He preached that wonderful sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth they led Him out of the city and were determined to hurl Him over the cliff and dash Him to pieces on the rocks bow; but, “He passing through the midst of them went his way” (Luke 4:30). Not one hand was raised to detain Him. They came to Him in the Garden on the night of His sorrows, as He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39); and when at last He saw the multitude coming He went forth to meet them and asked, “Whom seek ye?” And they said, “We seek Jesus of Nazareth.” And He answered, “I am He.” In so speaking He used the incommunicable name of God. Moses said to Jehovah, “Whom shall I say sent me to Pharaoh?” Gods’ answer was, “I am; say unto him I am hath sent thee.” When they came with swords and staves to arrest Jesus, He said, “I am,” and they went backward and fell to the ground.

They could not stand before His face when He asserted His deity. They had no power against Him. He had insisted upon that when He stood in Pilate’s Hall. Pilate asked Him, “Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and have power to release thee?” Jesus replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above. This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” So He put Himself in their hands and went out to die voluntarily, and the Sacrifice was bound to the horns of the altar. What was the cord that hound Him there? “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.” It was love to the Father; it was the desire to vindicate the righteousness of God; it was that He might glorify the Father, that led Him thus to go to that cross.

But that is only one of the cords that bound Him. The text intimates that there were more than one. “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” We may speak of the other as, “The Silver Cord of Love to Man,” for in Ephesians 5:25 and 26, it is written, “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” He could have gone free. The law had no claim upon Him. Jehovah had dreed, “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” but He had never been guilty of sin. He was free from all inward tendency to sin and yet He stooped in grace to take our place and went out to die in our room and stead. Never was love like His. You remember He said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” It was in grace He called them friends for by nature all men are enemies and alienated from God by wicked works. If He had been looking for friends for whom to die, He could not have found one in all this wide world, for of every man’s heart it is written, “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). It is His love that Makes us His friends. He looked on to what His grace would accomplish and He saw us as we would be when responsive to His mercy and loving kindness, and so treated us as friends and went to the cross to die for His friends. “Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar”— the Golden Cord of Love for God, because He was there to fulfill God’s righteousness, and gold is the symbol of divine righteousness in Scripture; the Silver Cord of Love to Man, for He was there to procure our redemption and salvation, and silver is the symbol of redemption in the Book of God.

What is our responsibility to love like this? Is it enough that putting our trust in Him as Saviour we shall know that He has put our sins away and fitted us for the presence of God? Shall we stop there? Is it enough that we come together from time to time and look back by faith to that cross and contemplate that love, meditate upon that mighty sacrifice with our hearts going out in worship and praise and adoration? Shall we stop there? Or shall we remember that love like this has claims on us and that as He was bound to the horns of the altar, so now the Word comes home to every redeemed soul, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). Shall we not turn to Him and say, “Blessed Lord, Thou wert bound with cords to the horns of the altar in order to redeem our souls from everlasting judgment. O, bind us to the place of sacrifice that we may be yielded wholly to Thyself, that we may live unto Thee. Now bind us there that we may not shrink back but ever offer to Thee the sacrifice of praise and thanks giving, and the sacrifice of well-doing to glorify Thy name,”

The early Christians used to speak of the Lord’s Supper as “The Sacrament.” Sometimes we lose track of the origin of these ecclesiastical terms and we wonder at them. How would anybody ever think of calling the eucharistic feast a “Sacrament?” This was the name given to the oath taken by a Roman legionary when he enlisted in the Imperial army. He took the oath of fealty to the Emperor, of loyalty to Rome, of devotion to those in authority above him; and from time to time as the troops were reviewed and they saluted the Emperor, this oath was renewed. So the early Christians came to think of each observance of the Lord’s Supper as a renewal of their allegiance to the Saviour who

had bought them with His blood and was now their risen Lord. Thus, little by little, they came to regard it as a sacramental service.

Perhaps the term has been misused. I am afraid it has. The simplicity of the feast of remembrance has been lost sight of. Traditional teaching has superseded the clear instruction of the Holy Scriptures. Ritualistic and liturgical practices have obscured the true character of the Supper of the Lord. But nevertheless we can well understand the thought that was in the minds of those early believers when they spoke of it as they did, and surely all who draw near to the Lord's Table should know what it is to realize afresh their eternal obligation to Him who has bought us with His own most precious blood. As we meet in hallowed communion to remember Him who remembered us in our great need, we may well look back and think of Him as the One all-sufficient sacrifice for sin bound by the cards of love to the horns of the altar. And as we partake of the bread and the cup should we not lift our hearts afresh and say, "Blessed Lord, Thou has died so great a death for me; Thou hast manifested such a marvelous love in the accomplishment of my redemption, now, anew, I yield myself unreservedly to Thee to be for Thy glory and praise while I am left in this scene."

To any who are still strangers to the matchless grace of God revealed in Christ, O, I beseech you, in lowliness of mind and with reverent mien draw near and see this great sight. The sinless Saviour bound to the altar for sinful men! Bow in penitence at His pierced feet and trust Him now as your very own Redeemer and confess Him as your Lord.

Daily Sacrifice, April 5

"Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar"— Psalms 118:27.

IN this prophetic psalm, which depicts our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem when acclaimed as the promised Son of David, with His rejection as the Stone set at Naught, following, we have the only passage in Scripture that indicates the specific use of the horns of the sacrificial altar. To these the victim was bound in order to be slain. The Lord was bound to the cross where He offered up Himself as a propitiation for our sins by the cords of love (Hos. 11:4), love to the Father (John 14:31), and love for the Church (Eph. 5:25); yes, love for Israel too who rejected Him, and love for this poor lost world. What response have we made to that love?

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, April 4

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men" —Psalms 107:8, 15, 21, 31.

FOUR times in Psalms 107 we have these same words, calling for praise and thanksgiving. Elsewhere we read, "Praise is comely for the upright" (Psa. 33:1), and again we are told, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psa. 50:23). Praise is the spontaneous outcome of a grateful heart who has experienced the saving grace of God and who recognizes His providential dealings and Fatherly care day by day. It is strange indeed that we should need to be urged to praise. But we are so prone to be forgetful of the source of our mercies and to rejoice in the gifts (which we so readily take for granted) rather than in the Giver Himself, who is worthy of our constant adoration. How often we pray for blessings and forget to give thanks when our cries are heard!

—Clara Aiken Speor.

Daily Sacrifice, April 4

"He satisfieth the longing souls and filleth the hungry soul with goodness"— Psalm 107:9.

IN creating man, God so constituted him that the passing things of time and sense could never satisfy the yearnings of his soul. It was the very purpose of God in bringing such a creature into existence that He might have one who could enter into His own thoughts and yield Him true love and devotion, So He put within the heart of every man a void which only He could fill. Thus the soul is errant until it finds its rest in God.

—Max I. Reich.

Daily Sacrifice, April 3

"Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He increased His people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtilly with His servants. He sent Moses His servant; and Aaron whom He had chosen"— Psalm 105:23-26.

IN these words, God, by His Holy Spirit, has summarized for us Israel's experiences in Egypt, and given us to see why they were permitted. He caused the family of Jacob to go down to that land, during the years of famine, to preserve them alive and to hold them together as one people. There, under favorable circumstances, they multiplied greatly, and if there had been no change in conditions they might eventually have held the controlling power in that country. But God had other plans for them. He had given the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed by solemn covenant (Gen. 17:8). In order, therefore, to prepare Israel to remove front Egypt to the land of promise, He permitted persecution and affliction to be visited upon them. The Psalmist declares that it was He who caused the Egyptians to hate His people. That is, it was all in His permissive will. The hard bondage into which they were pressed made them long for deliverance and cry to God for help. In due time, He sent His servants, Moses and Aaron, to announce that the day of their redemption from slavery had drawn nigh.

—Mary Bowley.

Daily Sacrifice, April 2

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain”—Psalms 104:1, 2.

PLATO said, “The radiant light is the shadow of God.” That was a wonderful thing for a pagan philosopher to say. But David sees clearer. He speaks of God as enrobed with light. Back of all the brilliant glory and splendor of the light is God Himself, from whom all light shines. He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto. But He has come out to us in the Person of His Son, who is the light and life of men, the light of the world. He is the image of the invisible God, in whom the light is fully manifested.

—Walter Chalmers Smith.

Daily Sacrifice, April 1

“I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing”— Psalm 101:1.

ALL God’s ways with His people will eventually work out for blessing. Whether it be His mercies which are new every morning, or His disciplinary dealings against which we often complain, all are for our good. Therefore we may well heed the admonition, “In everything give thanks.” There is no such thing as “bad luck” for the child of God. All is ordered by a loving Father’s hand and the experiences which seem the hardest to understand and the most distressing to endure, are under the control of Him who makes no mistakes but orders all for His glory and our profit.

—Mrs. Cousine.

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