

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 28 (9:24-25)

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible”—1 Corinthians 9:24, 25.

SCRIPTURE distinguishes between salvation which is by grace alone, and therefore altogether apart from human merit or works of any kind, and reward which is for service rendered in loving devotion to our rejected Lord, as we seek to glorify Him in this world, our place of testimony. This is the race we are called to run and in order to do so, it is imperative that the servant of Christ exercise godly self-control over all physical appetites. The incorruptible crown is the reward which we hope to receive at the hand of our Lord when we stand at His judgment-seat. To miss this token of His approval will be loss indeed!

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 27 (6:19-20)

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”—1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

GOD would have us realize that the body, which is such a wonderful evidence of His power and wisdom as our Creator, should be used for the glory of Him who gave us being and died to redeem us. To abuse the body by pernicious habits is to displease the Lord, and is wrong done to ourselves.

The salvation purchased for us by Christ’s atoning death is threefold. Spirit and soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23) have all been bought by the blood of Christ and all are to be devoted to His glory. We cannot grow in grace if we are indulging in sinful and fleshly lusts of any kind. Carnality is the bitter foe of spirituality. The body and its appetites are to be kept in subjection by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 9:27). Only thus can there be success in the Christian race (Heb. 12:1). The body is to be yielded to Christ (Rom. 12:1), and not to be polluted by that which would impair its usefulness, under the guise of Christian liberty (Gal. 5:13).

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 26 (6:11)

“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”—1 Corinthians 6:11.

A HARD field presents a challenge to the man of faith in which he delights. He knows that God works, not with what He finds, but with what He brings. His Spirit is able to break down and save the most indifferent or the most contentious men. Athens was the center of Greek culture—a veneer of learning that covered but did not destroy the wickedness of paganism, which caused and even pretended to sanctify the vilest practices. Corinth was notorious for its vice and corruption. To “Corinthianize” was a synonym for a life given over to shame and sensuality of the most degrading character. The worship of the gods of Greece produced no change in the lives of their devotees. Religion and immorality went hand in hand. The gods themselves were but deifications of lust and ambition. Those who worshipped them were like unto them.

But to these cities Paul came with a message which he knew to be the dynamic of God (Rom. 1:16), mighty to the destruction of Satanic strongholds and powerful in building new and holy lives which would demonstrate the might of the Spirit of God to renew and regenerate the most depraved of mankind, as well as those who gloried in their self-righteousness and fancied superiority. No new message was needed. It was the story of the cross—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—which revolutionized multitudes in Corinth and resulted in the establishment of a strong and highly-gifted church of God in that iniquitous city.

Daily Sacrifice, September 2 (6:15)

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?”—1 Corinthians 6:15.

OUR bodies belong to God and should be devoted to His service because of His twofold claim upon them.

He created us, and He gave His Son to redeem us. Moreover, it is by His power and goodness that we are sustained and strengthened for the responsibilities He puts upon us. While unsaved men ignore His authority, we who have trusted Christ as Saviour should own, with gladness, His Lordship over us and so yield to Him all our ransomed powers. The deepest joys in life are found as we recognize His claims and present our bodies in sacrificial service.

—Anon.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 25 (3:16)

INDIVIDUALLY each believer's body is spoken of as a temple of the Holy Spirit, as in 1 Cor. 6:19. Collectively, the entire Church is called "the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16). This is the building of living stones (1 Peter 2:5), the house of God (Heb. 3:6; 1 Tim. 3:15), the habitation in which He dwells and through which He reveals Himself to the world (Eph. 2:20-22). We read in Psalms 93:5, "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever." So, whether as individuals or in our collective capacity, we are responsible to walk before God in holiness and righteousness, as controlled by His Spirit who dwells within us.

The Holy Spirit in the believer is grieved by any careless behavior or intemperate indulgences which war against the soul; and so long as He is thus grieved He is not free to carry on His special ministry of taking the things of Christ and making them real to us.

—W. R. Moore.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 24 (2:1-2)

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" — 1 Cor. 2:1, 2.

IT is the preaching of the cross which is the appointed method of winning souls and building men up in Christ. Paul did not undervalue culture and education, but he dreaded the possibility of the refinements of rhetoric and the cleverness of the orator so occupying the minds of his hearers that they would become occupied with his ability instead of with the Christ he proclaimed. Therefore he studiously avoided anything that would have such a tendency, and in all simplicity he preached the message of the cross in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit to use that proclamation for the salvation of souls. In this he became an example to all other preachers.

—T. O. Chisholm.

Daily Sacrifice, September 1 (2:12-13)

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"—1 Cor. 2:12,13.

THE Bible not only contains the Word of God, but it is the Word of God (John 1a:35; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Heb. 4:12). That is, it is, throughout, a divinely given revelation of the mind of God, as to man and the world at large, and as to the plan of redemption. This is communicated in the very words that the Holy Spirit taught (1 Cor. 2:13). As we read the Holy Scriptures we may be certain that it is the Lord who speaks throughout, in every book and every chapter. As we study this Word we gain the knowledge of God and learn to know His power and grace as we could never learn them by contemplation of His creation, great and wonderful as it is. To surrender this Word, to turn away from its sure testimonies, is to be left to drift in the darkness without certainty of any kind.

—William Cowper.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 23 (1:10)

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" —1 Cor 1:10.

THE security and growth of the churches of God depend upon their obedience to His Word. The personnel of these early assemblies was very similar to that found in practically the same circumstances today. In themselves they were weak and unreliable. But their confidence was in the living God. In His Word He has given all necessary instruction for the confirmation and development of His disciples, both as individuals and in their Church relationships. It is all-important to realize that we have in the Scriptures, especially in the Book of the Acts and in the Epistles of Paul, who deals particularly with truth bearing on the privileges and responsibilities of the Church and the churches, all that is needed to guide us aright.

—D. Denham.

Daily Sacrifice, August 31 (1:9)

“God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” —1 Corinthians 1:9.

FELLOWSHIP involves the sharing of like interests and service in common for the glory of the one great Head of the Church. It is a fellowship of life and the Spirit, and cannot, therefore, be forced or built up by mere human effort or loyalty to certain ideals. It is something spontaneous, which those only know who have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Into it every new convert is welcomed, and from the moment he receives divine life he begins to share in its blessings, whether at first he fully realizes it or not. Unsaved people have no part nor lot in it (Acts 8:21), for “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). It is God Himself who asks, “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

—Charles Wesley.

Daily Sacrifice, August 30 (1:13)

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”—1 Corinthians 1:1-3.

ASSEMBLIES of Christians in apostolic days constituted one fellowship, wherever they might be located individually. All held the same precious faith, all proclaimed the same blessed gospel, and each was recognized as the expression of the Body of Christ in the particular place where he was found. Many divisions have come in since, and many unsaved ones have come into various churches, but true believers still constitute one holy fellowship as the “sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

As we enter into the truth of the one Body, our hearts will be enlarged to take in every member thereof.

Even where marked differences of judgment are found as to church order, disciplinary measures, and creedal statements, there will be practical unity where Christ Himself becomes the object of our hearts’ adoration.

—Charles Wesley.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, October 3 (15:20-22)

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” —1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

A PART from the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, Christianity would be just another religious system, or philosophical speculation. It is because of His triumph over death that our great High Priest is able to save to the uttermost ail those who come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25). That which converted Saul of Tarsus and changed him to Paul the apostle was the revelation that Jesus, who had been crucified, is now alive in highest glory. He had seen Him and heard His voice, and he never doubted afterward (1 Cor. 15:8). Everywhere he went he preached Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18). A message that sees in the cross simply a martyr’s death is not the Gospel. The good news revealed from Heaven is that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) and that He has been raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). The same gospel is today the power of God unto salvation when proclaimed with no uncertain sound in the energy of the Holy Spirit,

—G. W. Frazer.

Daily Sacrifice, September 6 (15:42,44)

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”—1 Corinthians 15:42, 44.

NATURAL and Spiritual. Almost unconsciously, perhaps, many people think of these terms as though they were contrasting a material body with a spiritual one. That is, they imagine that the present body of flesh and blood is to be entirely done away with in resurrection, and a body of spirit—immaterial—will take its place. But the risen body of our Lord was as truly material—a body of flesh and bone (Luke 24:39)—as that which hung upon the cross. It was the same, only glorified. A natural (or soulish) body is a body suited to the soul, the seat of all natural instincts and emotions. The spiritual body will be suited to the higher spiritual life which will be ours in resurrection.

—Mary Ann Kidder.

Daily Sacrifice, September 5 (15:1)

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you”—1 Corinthians 15:1.

THERE is no other remedy for man’s lost condition but the gospel. That gospel tells of Christ, who suffered and died for our redemption and now lives to sustain all who trust in Him.

When He is received by faith, a new life is imparted, and with that new life there are necessarily new motives, new desires, and new ambitions. As the believer walks with God, these result in true Christian devotedness, godless of life, and loving concern for those still unsaved, as well as brotherly care for those in Christ.

—Anon.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, October 2 (13:12)

“Then shall I know even as also I am known” —1 Corinthians 13:12.

LIFE is full of mysteries. Again and again the bewildered spirit asks “Why?” And to many of our questions there is no answer. It has not pleased God to explain all His ways with us here and now. Elihu said to Job, “He giveth not account of His matters” (Job 33:13). But faith counts on His infinite love and wisdom, and knows that someday all will be made plain, and in the light of His presence we shall get the answers to all the questions that have perplexed us. Then we shall know the hidden reasons for every trial, every sorrow, and we shall see that there was a “needs be” for all of His dealings with us. We may be sure that, when we see everything from the divine standpoint we shall be able to praise Him for all that now seems so bewildering.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, October 1 (13:1)

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity (love, R.V.), I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal” —1 Corinthians 13:1.

THERE is a great difference between the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, given unto us, and mere natural affection, precious as that is. The love of 1 Corinthians 13 is the expression of the new life communicated to believers in regeneration. It is the manifestation of the divine nature. It was seen in all its perfection in our Lord Jesus Christ as Man on earth. In the measure in which we live and walk in communion with Him the same love will be seen in us. If we were to change “love” into “Christ,” in verse 4 to 7 of this chapter, we would have a perfect pen-picture of our blessed Lord Himself. It is as we manifest this love that our witness really counts for God, even among those who spurn our message.

—Bishop Christopher Wordsworth.

Daily Sacrifice, September 4 (13:4-7)

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” —1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

THE “Song of Love” of 1 Corinthians 13 is recognized by all who know it as the great classic on that wonderful theme. But the love there set forth is far more than human affection. It is the outworking of the new nature, implanted by the Holy Spirit in all who are in saving relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. No man, apart from divine, enabling grace can attain to it. But where Christ dwells in the heart by faith, love is the inevitable result. It is not something that has to be pumped up, for it is not found in the unrenewed heart. It flows forth spontaneously from the inmost being of one who knows Christ and is yielded to His control.

Nothing can wear out the patience of love. It is ever kind, rejoicing in others’ blessing, and modest as to one’s own attainments.

—Horatius Boner.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 30 (12:12-13)

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” —1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

THE unity of the body is not merely a doctrinal tenet. It is a blessed and precious reality. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit all believers are united to the Risen Lord, the Church’s Head, in heaven, and to one another. This is an indissoluble relationship, and because of it, “the members should have the same care one for another,” rejoicing when a member is honored, feeling for one who suffers, and standing loyally

by those who have to endure persecution. This is to hold the truth of the one Body. It is quite another thing to acknowledge it as an article of faith. Many do this who show little or no concern for their fellow-members and the trying experiences many of them are called to pass through.

—F. Whitfield.

Daily Sacrifice, September 3 (11:26)

“As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come” —1 Corinthians 11:26.

MANY are the precious lessons associated with the remembrance of the Lord Jesus in His death, as we sit at the table of the Lord. We recall Him to mind in His lowliness, His gracious service, and His sacrificial death. We think of His love for us even unto the shedding of His precious blood to put away our sins. In view of all this, how contrite should our spirits be! Surely there is no place for self-seeking in the light of the cross and all that transpired there. We look on, too, in faith to His return for His saints and to take His great power and reign. It is to be observed “till He come.”

E. H. Bickersteth.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, September 29 (10:13)

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” —1 Corinthians 10:13.

TEMPTATION is used here in the sense of trial. Christians are exposed to the same trying circumstances that men of the world have to face. But they do not have to meet them alone. The Lord whom they serve is guarding His own and will never permit the furnace to be over-heated, nor allow His people to face conditions which will not work out for blessing, if gone through in fellowship with Himself. To know that “God is faithful” is as a sheet-anchor to the soul no matter how the storms may rage and the tempests blow. He will not forsake those who put their trust in Him. He will either deliver from the trial or give grace to bear it.

—Grace E. Troy.

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