

1 Samuel - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Daily Sacrifice, February 17 (10:25)

"Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house"—1 Samuel 10:25.

ISRAEL, in the beginning of her national history, was a theocracy. God Himself was her King, who revealed His will through His prophets and through the inspired Word as committed to Moses and his successors. It was when the priesthood had broken down, and even the prophetic office failed in a measure, that the people demanded a king, in order that they might be more like the nations surrounding them. They were out of touch with God, and so they wanted an arm of flesh on which to lean. In response to their insistent plea, God gave them Saul, after warning them, through Samuel, of what his reign would mean. But nothing could dissuade or turn them aside from their determination to have a leader who could rule over them and command their armies in time of war. Saul was their choice as well as God's. In vociferously acclaiming him their king, they were only carrying out what He had decreed, little as they realized it.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 15 (13:14)

"The Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee" — 1 Samuel 13:14.

IT was in his confident trust that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). He was in himself a sinner like all others (Rom. 3:23), but he repented bitterly of his failures, which brought him so much unhappiness, and which entailed grave dishonor upon the sacred name so dear to him. He rested at last upon "the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3), that is, the divine promises, and his songs of joyous confidence in the God of his salvation have become the models for all true praise and worship, and have been loved by both pious Jews and devout Christians throughout all the centuries since he sang them in Judea so long ago.

—J. C. Deck.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 16 (15:22-23)

"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king" —1 Sam. 15:22, 23.

SAUL'S life, or at least his official history, began well and gave promise of a most successful and brilliant career, but it ended in bitter disappointment. He has been rightly called "The Man after the Flesh." As such, he possessed many admirable traits and at the start he seemed to be an ideal king. But his goodness was like the morning cloud that soon passes away. It was only the attractiveness of nature. We would like to believe that when "the Lord gave him another heart," it means he was born again. But it seems rather to imply that he was given a new outlook on life, with new courage and new ambitions to fit him for the high office to which he was appointed. Apparently he never knew God in the true sense, as Samuel did before him, and as David did, who succeeded him. His life should be a solemn warning to those who would make a fair show in the flesh, emphasizing the importance of true repentance and genuine faith.

Daily Sacrifice, February 18 (16:7)

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"—1 Samuel 16:7.

MEN are prone to make much of brilliant gifts and magnificent carriage, but God, who sees not as we do, looks upon the heart. With Him it is beauty of character and lowly subjection to His will that count far more than outward show. He chose David, not only because of what He knew him to be in his youth, but because of what He was going to make of him in years to come. We say, "The child is father of the man," and we mean that early years give promise of future behavior. It is a remarkable fact that most men whom God has used in an outstanding manner learned to know Him in their youth, and walked with Him through the years that followed.

—Edith Sanford Tillotson.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 17 (18:1,3)

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul” —1 Samuel 18:1, 3.

THE beautiful record of the friendship between Jonathan, the heir to the throne of Israel, and David, the outlawed hero whom the people revered, is one of the most interesting and affecting stories in all literature. The Greek tale of Damon and Pythias is perhaps its nearest counterpart in secular literature.

It illustrates in a remarkable way that heart devotion to Christ, “great David’s greater Son,” which should characterize every truly converted soul. David’s victory over Goliath typifies Christ’s triumph over “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14, 15). It was this that won Jonathan’s heart and caused him to love David as his own soul. He should have challenged the giant, but David took his place. Henceforth the youthful victor had the preeminence in the mind of the prince-royal, who “stripped himself” to honor the deliverer of Israel (1 Sam. 18:1-4).

—Ray Palmer, D.D.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 18 (18:4)

“Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow and to his girdle” —1 Samuel 18:4.

IT was as though he said, “What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for” David—the one chosen of God to deliver Israel. In this Jonathan portrays the attitude of soul which all should manifest toward our Lord Jesus Christ who has overcome, for us, him that had the power of death in order that He might deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Jonathan’s actions said, “Nothing is too good for David, for him who took his life in his hand to set us free from the dread Philistine who had terrorized Israel for so long.” Surely we who owe all to Him who has wrought so much greater a deliverance should withhold nothing from Christ, who has brought us into “this grace wherein we stand.”

—R. H. T.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 19 (23:18)

JONATHAN loved David and was devoted to him, but he never separated himself from the house of his ungodly father to throw in his lot entirely with the friend he esteemed so highly. This verse tells of the last time the two friends met. David continued in the place of rejection. Jonathan went back to his own house and was destined to die on Mount Gilboa when Saul was overthrown. His dream of association with David in the coming day when the kingdom would actually be his, was never fulfilled. The lesson for us is a salutary one. We are called to put the claims of Christ above all others—even above the closest natural ties. Our reward hereafter will answer to what we have suffered by identification with our rejected Lord now.

—A. B. Simpson.

Daily Sacrifice, February 14 (2:35)

“And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before Mine anointed forever”—1 Samuel 2:35.

IT is a very serious thing to be put in a position of special privilege in spiritual things; for with the privileges there go great responsibilities. God set apart the priestly family in Israel as His representatives to the people, and that they might represent the people before Him. It was therefore all-important that they should be a holy and conscientious group to whom the people would look up and in whom they would have confidence. Failing in these particulars, they no longer had any place of real value in Israel, and so were set aside at last. Man has failed in every relationship in which he has stood before God. Christ is Himself our great High Priest, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26-28). Believers now are all linked up with Him as a priestly house, upon whom the responsibility rests to witness for God to men and to intercede with Him on behalf of men. It is therefore incumbent upon us to walk before Him in holiness and righteousness.

—G. Ter Steegen.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 12 (2:1)

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy, salvation” —1. Sam. 2:1.

THE story of Hannah and her son Samuel is one of perennial freshness and beauty, and is designed of God to be an encouragement and to some degree an example to all mothers. From the primeval promise as to the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent’s head, motherhood has ever been hallowed and safeguarded in the Word of God. Because the Eternal Son of God chose to come to earth as a little helpless babe, to all outward appearance dependent on a mother’s care, all mothers have a peculiar place in the divine economy. Who can tell the far-reaching effects of a godly mother’s prayers, counsel, and example? The most hardened men melt when reminded of a good mother, no matter how far they have strayed from her precepts.

Surely, if anyone on earth needs really to know God and to live for Him before others, it is the mother of children, whose eternal destiny depends so largely upon their early training. As we study the story of Hannah’s yearning, her prayer, her promise, and her faithfulness, it should draw out all our hearts to that God who has said, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you” (Isa. 66:13).

—Isaac Watts.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 20 (30:6)

“David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” —1 Samuel 30:6.

IT was a dark day in David’s life, probably the most trying ordeal he had been called upon to pass through. Because of the disaster that had befallen the families of his devoted followers, even they questioned his wisdom and righteousness and threatened to stone him as though he were responsible for all that had taken place. Self-defense was useless. It would have been a waste of effort to explain. So he turned from man to God and found encouragement there. It is a great thing to put God between the soul and adverse circumstances. He never fails the one who confides in Him. David’s confidence was soon rewarded and his men realized as never before that God was with him.

Daily Sacrifice, February 15 (3:19-20)

“And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord” —1 Samuel 3:19, 20.

GOD Himself can put no greater honor upon one whom He has taken into relationship with Himself than to call and commission him to be His spokesman to other men. But with this privilege go great responsibilities. The life should correspond with the message. In Samuel we see consistency of behavior—a walk before God—which gave Israel to know he was Jehovah’s representative, to whom they could turn for helpful counsel and for spiritual enlightenment in a day when there was no open vision (3:1). That is, there were few who had understanding of the mind of the Lord.

—J. P. Scholfield.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 13 (3:13)

“I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” —1 Samuel 3:13

IN Eli, the high priest in Hannah’s day, we see a thoroughly good man, who, however, was prone to misjudge others and yet was weak when it came to disciplining his own family. The fact that in his last days he was “an old man, and heavy,” suggests that he was over-indulgent in regard to his personal habits, the pleasures of the table evidently having a strong appeal which he was not able to resist. In chapters two and four, inclusive, we get enough information concerning him to enable us to form a reasonably accurate picture of his character. Coupled with real concern for the things of God was lack of ability to master his appetites and to “command his children and his household after him” (Gen. 18:19) in such a way as to glorify God in family life. Such men are often met with in Christian service, who possess many amiable qualities but are sadly lacking where they should be strong.

It is ever important to remember that the grace of God does not set aside the divine government. There are responsibilities that flow from grace which cannot be ignored with impunity. Antinomianism (lawlessness) and legality are both opposed to grace. But a recognition of the divine authority and careful subjection to the government of God should flow from the knowledge of His unmerited favor. Fatherly discipline is expected of all who head up Christian households. Weakness here is a sign of low thoughts of the holiness and righteousness which are becoming in all who draw nigh to God.

Daily Sacrifice, February 16 (7:9,12)

“Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.... Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” —1 Samuel 7:9, 12.

OF all animals, this was one of the most helpless and dependent. It well pictured Israel's own state. It also typified the One who was yet to be manifested as Israel's Saviour, who, as a lamb dumb before its shearers, was to submit patiently both to man's malignant treatment and to the judgment of God as He took the place of the guilty. With the lamb on the altar, Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him, as He always hears those who come to Him in acknowledged repentance and in faith put in their plea.

A memorial stone was erected on the battlefield site to celebrate, not Israel's might or prowess, but the Lord's victory over their haughty foes. It is well that we set up such stones of remembrance that we may never forget the mighty acts of our God!

—Zuella Cooke.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, February 14 (7:3)

“And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines” —1 Samuel 7:3.

EVEN before the death of Eli it became evident that Samuel was his divinely-appointed successor as judge in Israel. And so, after the disconcerting experiences of the Philistines in connection with the ark of the covenant led them to send it back to the people whose glory it was, we find the young prophet coming immediately to the front, and through his ministry there was a revival of interest in the worship of Jehovah and a true return to God on the part of many. God works through human instruments and He always has the man ready when the hour of blessing strikes. The history of the great awakenings throughout the centuries, first in Israel and then in the Church of the new dispensation, is largely the story of the chosen servants prepared by God and subject to His will, who have been raised up to call an erring people to repentance and to bring them back to their only proper allegiance. Of these, Samuel stands out as one of the greatest of the whole army of the reformers.

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